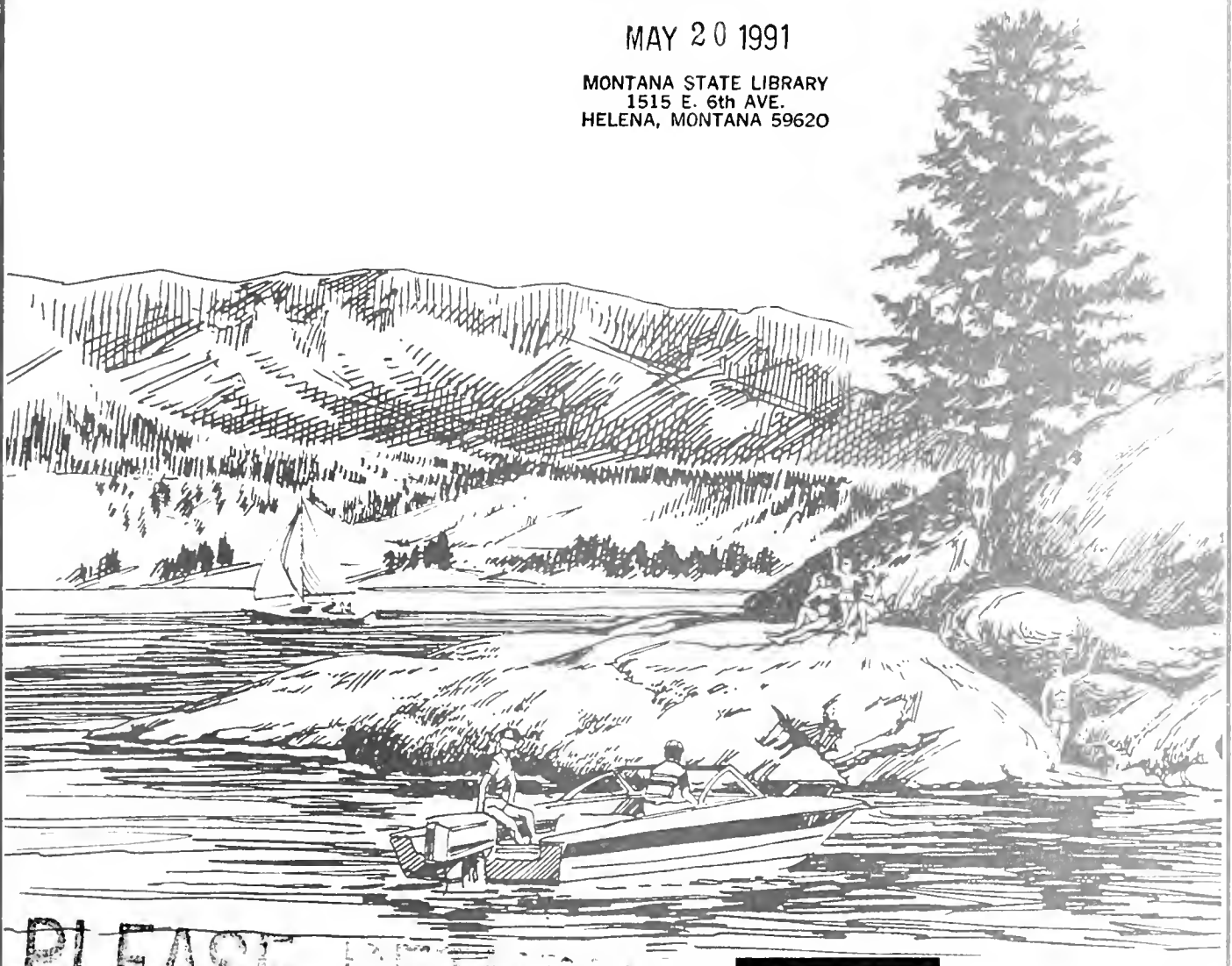


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THE STATE PARK SYSTEM  
Montana's Legacy -  
A New Growth Industry

A Report to Governor Stan Stephens  
and the 52nd Legislature

Respectfully Submitted by  
THE STATE PARK FUTURES COMMITTEE  
November 1990

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The State park system : Montana's legacy-



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... The committee dedicates this report to the memory of member **KEITH TILKENS**. His death on January 20, 1990, was a tragic loss. We believe that the task we started together is completed by caring Montanans, the gems of the State Park System will sparkle from all their facets in fulfillment of the goal to which he was dedicated . . .

. . . The committee would like to thank Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Director K. L. Cool and his staff for the courtesy, cooperation, assistance, and accommodation given the committee throughout the course of this study. We particularly appreciate the time he and Governor Stephens spent with the committee.

This administration has inherited a problem of long standing. It is to be commended for giving its resolution a priority among the numerous difficult challenges with which it must also deal . . .



November 1, 1990

The Honorable Stan Stephens  
Governor of the State of Montana  
Capitol Building  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Stephens:

Now that we have completed our report, the State Parks Futures Committee is pleased to confirm that the decision to call for public evaluation of Montana's park system was wise and timely.

From public deliberations we learned that Montanans have a passionate love affair with "their" outdoor resources. But they are confused about much of the State Park System and are unhappy with its deteriorating condition. They prize state parks as an integral part of our social infrastructure—as necessary as roads and bridges. Some use the condition of our parks as an indicator or measure of the quality of Montana lifestyle.

Because of their strong concern for the future viability of their cherished parks, Montanans were eager to participate in the public forums. A great volume of excellent information was surfaced and shared. In general, Montanans are alarmed at the gradual deterioration of many of our natural and cultural treasures. Everyone openly recognized that much of the corrective action that was suggested would cost money. Our committee was encouraged to hear, at all the meetings, that the participants were "willing to pay a fair share" to upgrade Montana's state parks.

Funding, while critical, represents but one element of a bigger problem. Our committee recommendations represent a distillate of many innovative remedies for a broad range of deficiencies. Some can be implemented organizationally within state government with modest budget adjustments. Actually, during the year of our work we witnessed several excellent changes by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Substantive changes will require more time and money. Our committee is alarmed at the rate of parks degradation involving a number of irreplaceable state treasures. Having reviewed other states' experiences in like circumstances, we strongly recommend that bold, decisive, and unified action be initiated as soon as possible. We respectfully suggest close study of our partnership option.

The unparalleled richness of our natural and cultural resources and their great promise for enhancing both our social and economic well-being deserves no less. Traditional methods are not working. It is important to test our citizens' resolve and enlist full participation to ensure that these public assets will not be diminished as a legacy for our heirs.

Having publicly identified this situation—on our watch—history may prove unforgiving if we fail to make a creditable effort to redress the alarming trend. The State Park Futures Committee has been honored to participate in the exercise and we hope our findings prove useful in developing Montana's State Park System up to its considerable potential.

Sincerely,

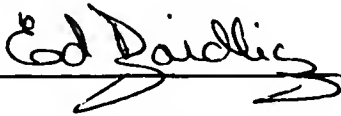
Ed Zaidlicz, Chairman  
State Park Futures Committee

cc: President of the Senate  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
State Legislators  
Fish and Game Commissioners  
K. L. Cool, Director  
Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Montanans who participated

## The State Park Futures Committee

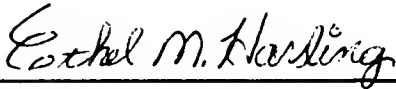
**Ed Zaidlicz, Chairman**

Billings  
Retired BLM State Director;  
Former Chairman, 1986 Governor's  
Forums on Montanans Outdoors



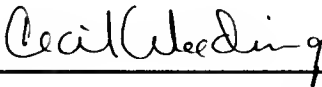
**Senator Ethel M. Harding**

Polson  
Businesswoman



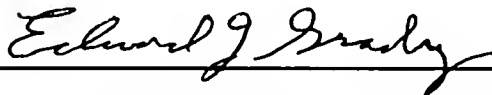
**Senator Cecil F. Weeding**

Jordan  
Rancher



**Representative Edward J. Grady**

Canyon Creek  
Rancher



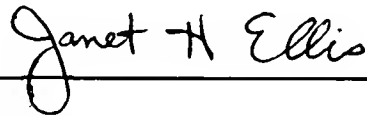
**Representative Joe Quilici**

Butte  
Businessman



**Janet H. Ellis**

Helena  
Program Director  
Montana Audubon Council



**Margaret Kochman**

Great Falls  
Businesswoman;  
Chairman, Cascade County Park Board;  
Member, Giant Springs  
Heritage State Park Commission



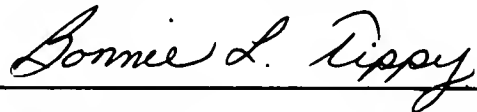
**James Nave**

Bozeman  
Businessman;  
Concessionaire, Lewis and Clark  
Caverns State Park



**Bonnie L. Tippy**

Helena  
Businesswoman;  
Director, Montana Innkeepers Association



**Donald R. Tuttle**

Victor  
US Army Retired;  
Montana State Director, Good Sam Club



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	(not for general distribution)



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary represents a highlighted digest of the report to provide a general overview. It lacks vital detail and specificity found only in the full report. This report synthesizes what the State Park Futures Committee learned from professionals inside and outside the department, from the public, from a good look at the parks, from literature review of the experiences of other state park systems, and from each other. We believe our recommendations are practical, attainable, cost-effective in the long run, are in the public interest, and will earn public support.

### Who is the State Park Futures Committee?

The State Park Futures Committee was appointed by The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in August 1989 with approval of Governor Stephens and legislative leaders. The committee's task was to make recommendations to the Governor, the 52nd Legislature, and the Fish and Game Commission about the proper role, priorities, and funding for state parks. (p. 3)

### What is the Montana State Park System?

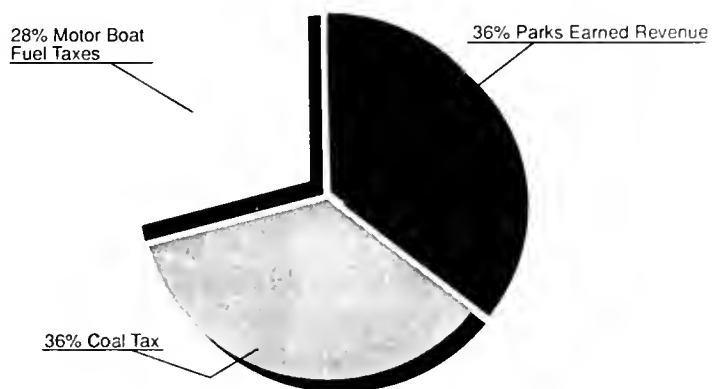
The 1939 Legislature provided the foundation upon which the State Park System has been built. It established the system "For the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing for their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health . . . ." (p. 20)

Today the Montana State Park System includes 60 parks covering 30,000 acres. These natural, cultural, and recreation sites are found in every region of the state. Every year 3,000,000 people visit Montana's state parks. The current budget is \$2,300,000 for operations and \$1,300,000 for improvements. The Park Division's staff of 43 full-time and 140 seasonal people is one of the smallest in the nation. (p. 17)

### Where does current funding come from?

Montana's Parks Division (and other divisions within the department which use park funds in support of parks) currently spend from three primary sources: parks earned revenue (36%), coal tax (36%), and motor boat fuel taxes (28%). (p. 17)

The State Parks Division receives no money from hunting and fishing licenses or the General Fund for day to day management. The \$1,300,000 budget for capital improvements comes from a variety of sources.



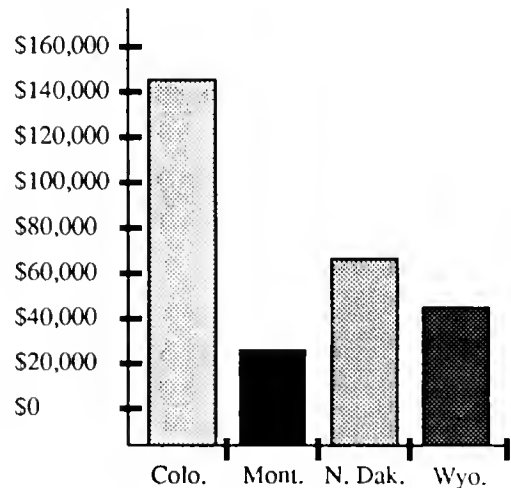
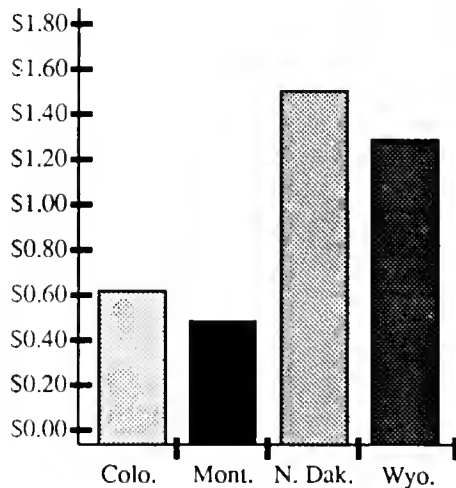
## How does the Montana State Park System compare with park systems in other states?

Our State Park System ranks near the bottom among the fifty states. At \$0.49 per visitor it spends only about 1/3 as much as North Dakota or the National Park Service. Put another way, Montana spends \$25,000 per park while North Dakota spends \$66,000 and Colorado spends \$145,000. At 43 full-time and 140 seasonal employees, Montana's staff is one of the smallest in the nation. (p. 17)

We are one of 5 states which offer no modern camp sites with electrical and water service. We rank 48th in the nation in spending per visitor and share with Wyoming the distinction of having no fixed outlay for capital construction of user facilities. Consequently, Montana ranks last in the nation in the amount of revenue it is able to earn per visitor. (p. 18)

Montana, with 0.005% of its total area devoted to state parks, has proportionately less park land than any other state in the union except North Dakota (0.004%). (p. 18)

### State Park System Expenditures



## How do state parks benefit Montanans?

The committee found that Montanans have a love affair with their outdoor resources. They prize state parks as an integral part of our social infrastructure as necessary as roads and bridges. The committee found that state parks hold a priceless natural and cultural heritage, arguably the best in the nation. (p. 2)

Out-of-state visitors to Montana's state parks contribute almost \$45 million to Montana's economy which supports 1,500 private sector jobs. When compared to the parks' current annualized expenditure of \$2.3 million for operations and \$1.3 million for improvements, spending by out-of-state visitors to Montana's state parks represents a ten-to-one return on this investment. (p. 17)



## What is the condition of the Montana State Park System?

The committee inspected more than 20 state parks and heard testimonies and read studies about all the rest. The committee found that our state parks represent the unparalleled richness of Montana's natural and cultural resources. These parks offer Montanans and our guests a sense of our own history and identity, provide places of learning and inspiration, and opportunities for "re-creation" and re-vitalization in the most beautiful surroundings available anywhere.

Our state parks provide a dramatic visual measure of the quality of life and style to which we aspire. They represent the things we treasure. In many ways the care which we give them is a reflection of the maturity of our society.

Sadly, this wealth is not being used to our advantage now, and of more concern, may be compromised or even lost if present trends are not reversed. Vandalism and other degradation of irreplaceable resources is alarmingly evident in many of the parks the committee visited. The longer we wait to address these problems, the more it will cost and the less there will be left to salvage. (pp. 19- 21)

The committee observed emergency need for stabilizing historic structures, controlling erosion and public use, correcting threats to human health and safety, and creating barrier-free access for people with handicaps. The committee also noted unrealized opportunities to inform and educate park visitors and school children.

The committee noted a lack of even the most basic inventory of park resources. Thus, parks staff cannot protect these resources, much less make them available to the public for education and enjoyment. (pp. 21-22)

## What do Montanans want from their state parks?

This Report is based on more than a year of meetings by the State Park Futures Committee, community meetings attended by over 500 people in 15 Montana communities, a statewide newspaper survey, and uncounted phone calls, letters, and conversations. (p.16) This is what Montanans want:

*"A State Park System which protects Montana's significant natural and cultural heritage, enhances peoples' well-being, provides high-quality and accessible recreational opportunities for Montanans and visitors, and is appropriately managed to improve the economy through tourism . . ."* (p. 20)

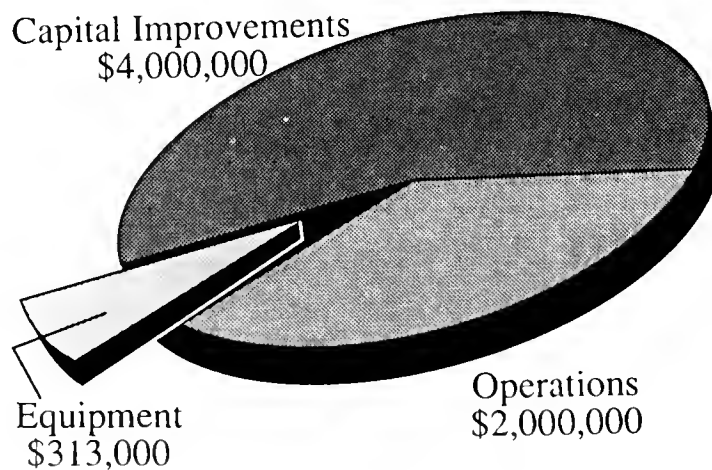
Montana has almost completely overlooked the economic value of the State Park System. Even in its present under-developed condition, the park system could be more effectively used through networking with other tourism providers and promotional activities to augment economic benefits currently identified.

## What would it cost?

The State Park Futures Committee recommends a level of funding that will establish a quality, but still very basic, park system. The committee recommends an additional \$6,313,000 per year which will establish a quality park system over the next five years. The committee also recommends an additional 30 full-time equivalent employees. (pp. 29, 34)



## How would the money be spent?



## Where should the money come from?

The committee is aware that finding additional funding for parks will be a difficult matter for the Governor and the Legislature. The committee felt that it would be best to suggest a broad spectrum of options which it considers the most appropriate of the many it considered. The committee further suggests that a healthy park system draws upon a rational mix of appropriate funding sources rather than relying on a single source of funding.

**The committee unanimously recommends the following funding sources:**

**General Fund (p. 37);  
Coal Tax (p. 38; and  
equitable assessment of user fees (p. 40).**

A majority of the committee agreed on 13 other recommendations. Several included qualifiers that must be noted in the main report. (pp. 36-42):

Rental Car Fees  
Statewide Mil Levy  
New \$.01 Gas Tax  
Big Sky Dividend  
Sales Tax  
Recreational Equipment Tax  
Restaurant Tax  
RV Sticker  
Nonresident Boat Fees  
Existing Park Roads Maintenance Law Amendment  
Motor Vehicle Taxes  
Small Boat Fees  
Federal Matching Funds

The committee also considered and rejected 10 other funding options. (p. 36)



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## **What else needs to be done?**

### **In Planning (pp. 23, 30-32)**

Clearly, much public misinformation exists about our State Park System. This is partly because publicly developed long-range plans have not been developed.

The department lacks comprehensive inventories of the Park System's natural and cultural resources and lacks site specific management plans for many of its parks.

1) Complete the draft State Park System Plan and develop site specific management plans where lacking. Involve the public in these efforts.

2) Develop and apply system-wide quality standards for facilities and services in all parks.

3) All of Montana's natural, cultural, and recreational resources should be comprehensively inventoried, beginning with state properties.

4) Delay disposal of any parks until sufficient planning and inventorying has been done and the public has been involved. The disposal process must follow the long-range plan to assure the public is being properly served and that parks are being used to the maximum advantage to the state.

### **In Management (pp. 32, 33)**

1) The department should strive to make Parks an equal partner with its Fish and Wildlife elements.

2) The department should promote the highest quality professional standards and opportunity for staff.

3) The division should collaborate with other agencies, organizations, and professionals.

4) Parks staff should increase public involvement and the division's accountability to the public.

### **In Image and Marketing (pp. 33, 34)**

1) Montana state parks should present a consistent image of the highest professional quality, both in its personnel and in park facilities.

2) The Governor should develop an aggressive marketing and promotion campaign for parks.

### **In Partnerships (pp. 43-47)**

Partnerships not only offer the best opportunity to maximize effectiveness but also demonstrate to today's more sophisticated and knowledgeable public that their public servants are up to the challenge of working for the common good and pooling of resources. The public is most bothered by waste of resources and money and by needless duplication of effort. The public is cynical about the government's ability to make effective use of scarce taxpayers' dollars. Partnerships attack the problem on both fronts in highly visible ways.

The committee sees opportunity for expanding the use of partnerships in two broad areas:

1) Within the Governor's administration such as between tourism and parks; and

2) Outside of state government, such as with the federal and local agencies and the private sector, where the Governor and his administrative leadership is needed.

### **With Montana Conservation Corps (pp. 48-49)**

Faced with a degeneration of a priceless legacy involving our state parks and our troubled youth, we can ameliorate both problems by early reactivation of our dormant MCC program. The magic formula the Civilian Conservation Corps devised 50 years ago is still valid and most applicable.

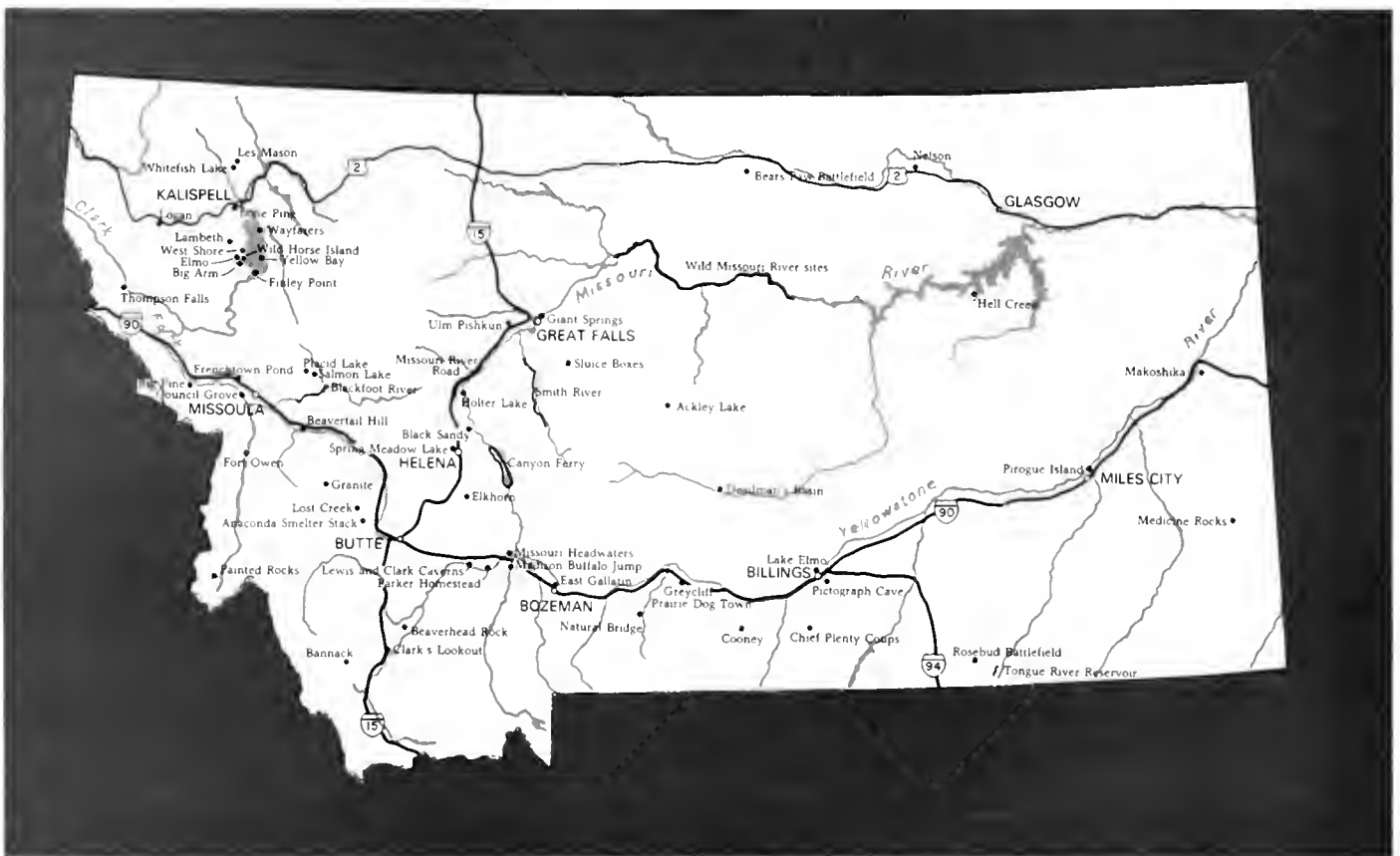
The committee recommends that the MCC program be funded and implemented as soon as possible.

## The 1990 Montana Historic Sites Study Commission (p. 50)

The State Park Futures Committee appreciates the work of the 1990 Montana Historic Sites Study Commission and the Historical Society. Its detailed study of technical matters which are beyond the expertise of our committee gives appropriate special attention to our priceless cultural heritage. The committee will be issuing a separate report.

## CONCLUSION

We believe that this report accurately reflects the current condition of our parks, their management, and their needs. Montana's parks have the potential to be the best in the nation . . . a goal within our reach and worthy of our efforts . . . for ourselves, our children, and generations to come. (p. 51 )



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# Montana State Parks Directory

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## 1 ACKLEY LAKE

Ackley Lake, named after an early settler and frontiersman, offers diverse water sports opportunities. Stocked with rainbow trout, the lake is often good angling for 10-to-15-inch fish. [17 miles west of Lewistown on U.S. 87 to Hobson, then 5 miles south on Secondary 400, then 2 miles southwest on county road; 160 acres, 4,400' el. (406) 454-3441]

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## 2 ANACONDA SMELTER STACK

The old Anaconda Copper Company smelter stack, completed on May 5, 1919, is one of the tallest free-standing brick structures in the world at 585 feet, 1.5 inches. The inside diameter at the bottom is 75 feet and at the top, 60 feet. The stack can only be viewed at a distance. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (Undeveloped.) [In Anaconda on Montana 1; 1 acre, 5,588' el. (406) 542-5500]

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## 3 BANNACK

The ghost town of Bannack, the site of Montana's first major gold discovery in 1862, became Montana's first territorial capital in 1864. The main street is lined with historic log and frame structures that recall Montana's formative years. Bannack Days, with historic displays, activities, and events, is held the third weekend in July each year. The visitor center and campground are open from mid-May through September. A group picnic site is available on a reservation basis. National Historic Landmark. [5 miles south of Dillon on I-15, then 21 miles west on Secondary 278, then 4 miles south on county road; 198 acres, 5,890' el. (406) 834-3413]

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## 4 BEAVERHEAD ROCK

Sacajawea recognized this huge landmark, resembling the head of a swimming beaver, while traveling with the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (Undeveloped.) [14 miles south of Twin Bridges on Montana 41; 71 acres, 5,000' el. (406) 994-4042]

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## 5 BEAVERTAIL HILL

This area has one-half mile of Clark Fork frontage that provides fishing and floating opportunities. Twenty-five developed campsites are available under a thick canopy of river cottonwoods. [26 miles southeast of Missoula on I-90 to Beavertail Hill exit, then .25 mile south on county road; 65 acres, 3,500' el. (406) 542-5500]

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## 6 BIG ARM

On Flathead Lake's Big Arm Bay, this park is a popular jump-off point to Wild Horse Island. Though gravelly, Big Arm's long beach is popular with sunbathers and swimmers. Camping under a stand of mature ponderosa pine and juniper is a major attraction. Others include: fishing for lake trout, boardsailing, bird watching, scuba diving, swimming, and waterskiing. [12 miles north of Polson on U.S. 93; 55 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 849-5255 or 752-5501]

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## 7 BIG PINE

Ponderosa pine is Montana's state tree, and this park has one of the largest specimens in the state. It also has a delightful primitive camping area along the banks of Fish Creek, a clear, fast-moving mountain stream. [18 miles east of Superior, Fish Creek exit, 5 miles south on Fish Creek Rd.; 19 acres, 2,900' el. (406) 542-5500]

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## 8 BLACKFOOT RIVER

This area starts at the Missoula-Powell county line and follows the

Blackfoot River downstream to Johnsrud Park, 25 miles north of Missoula. County roads parallel the river much of the way. River floating is most popular early in the summer when high water covers most of the rocks. However, the river can be very cold, and the current is strong. Black bear, deer, elk, and other wildlife can be seen throughout the corridor. [18 miles east of Missoula on Highway 200, then 1 mile northeast on Blackfoot River Rd.; 1,515 acres, 3,400' el. (406) 542-5500]

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## 9 BLACK SANDY

One of the few public parks on the shores of Hauser Reservoir, Black Sandy is an extremely popular weekend boating, kokanee salmon and trout fishing, and waterskiing take-off point. Interpretive displays describe the history of Hauser Dam, a short distance north of the park. [7 miles north of Helena on I-15, then 4 miles east on Secondary 453, then 3 miles north on county road; 55 acres, 3,650' el. (406) 444-4720]

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## 10 CANYON FERRY

Canyon Ferry Reservoir, with a shoreline of 76 miles, is bounded by rolling pine- or grass-covered hills. Numerous recreation opportunities include picnicking, camping, fishing, swimming, and boating. Three full-service marinas provide docking space for over 300 boats. The area is also rich in points of scenic, historic, and geologic interest. The visitor center at Canyon Ferry Village provides information about the dam's hydroelectric facilities and the area's recreation opportunities. [10 miles east of Helena on U.S. 12/287, then 8 miles north on Secondary 284; 3,500 acres, 3,800' el. (406) 475-3060]

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## 11 BEARS PAW BATTLEFIELD

Site of the surrender of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce on October 5, 1877. After a 1,700-mile retreat through some of the roughest country in the West, Chief Joseph, tired and disheartened, made his famous speech of surrender: "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever." [16 miles south of Chinook on Secondary 240; 200 acres, 3,842' el. (406) 228-9347]

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## 12 CHIEF PLenty COUPS

Situated within the Crow Reservation in south-central Montana, this park was the home of Plenty Coups, last chief of the Crow. Plenty Coups' log home and store remain as evidence of the chief's efforts to lead his people in adopting the lifestyle of the white man. [1 mile west of Pryor on county road; 195 acres, 4,100' el. (406) 252-1289]

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## 13 CLARK'S LOOKOUT

Projecting above the dense cottonwoods and willows along the Beaverhead River, this rock outcropping provided an opportunity for members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to view the route ahead. (Undeveloped.) [In Dillon on I-90 at Montana 41 exit, .5 mile east, then .5 mile north on county road; 7 acres, 5,406' el. (406) 834-3413]

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## 14 COONEY

This irrigation reservoir is the most popular recreation area serving south-central Montana. Attractions include good walleye and rainbow trout fishing. Boating opportunities are abundant, and lots of camping space is available. [22 miles southwest of Laurel on U.S. 212, then 5 miles west of Boyd on county road; 304 acres, 4,600' el. (406) 252-4654]

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## 15 COUNCIL GROVE

This park marks the site of the 1855 council between Isaac Stevens and the Flathead, Kutenai, and Pend d'Oreille Indians. Here the Indians signed the Hellgate Treaty and relinquished their ancestral hunting grounds in exchange for a reservation in the Mission Valley. The area provides good rainbow and brown trout fishing in the Clark Fork. [In Missoula on I-90 at Reserve St. Exit, 2 miles south on Reserve St., then 10 miles west on Mullan Rd.; 187 acres, 3,000' el. (406) 542-5500]

## 16 DEADMAN'S BASIN

This irrigation reservoir on the open prairie north of the Musselshell River provides miles of shoreline for a variety of water sports. It is also good fishing for kokanee salmon and rainbow trout. [20 miles east of Harlowton on U.S. 12, then 1 mile north on county road; 618 acres, 3,900' el. (406) 252-4654]

## 17 EAST GALLATIN

This area's prime attraction is a 5-acre lake that offers excellent conditions for beginning boardsailors as well as swimming, picnicking, and sunbathing. Day-use only; no overnight camping. (Under development.) [In Bozeman, North 7th Ave. to Griffin Dr., then .5 mile east; 84 acres, 4,795' el. (406) 994-4042]

## 18 ELKHORN

Fraternity Hall and Gillian Hall, two picturesque structures in this early-day silver-mining ghost town, have been preserved as outstanding examples of frontier architecture. Each has been recorded in the Historic American Buildings Survey. Forest Service campgrounds are nearby. (Undeveloped.) [I-15 at Boulder exit, then 7 miles south on Montana 69, then 11 miles north on county road; 1 acre, 6,400' el. (406) 994-4042]

## 19 ELMO

Situated on Big Arm, the largest bay of Flathead Lake, Elmo is a large, open campground partially shaded by juniper trees. Its long gravel shoreline and beach are popular with swimmers, boardsailors, and sailboaters. If you enjoy a less crowded camping experience and like the sun, then Elmo may be for you. [2 miles north of Elmo on U.S. 93, 40 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 849-5744 or 752-5501]

## 20 FINLEY POINT

Finley Point is located in a secluded, mature pine forest near the south end of Flathead Lake. Deer are often seen in winter but move to higher ground during the summer months. The kokanee salmon and lake trout fishing off Finley Point is often excellent. [11 miles north of Polson on Montana 35, then 4 miles west on county road; 24 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 887-2715 or 752-5501]

## 21 FORT OWEN

Built of adobe and logs, Fort Owen is the site of the first permanent white settlement in Montana. Father Pierre DeSmet came to the area in 1841 and established St. Mary's Mission among the Flathead Indians. In 1850, Major John Owen established the fort as a regional trade center. Period furnishings and artifacts are displayed in the restored rooms of the east barracks. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places. [25 miles south of Missoula on U.S. 93 to Stevensville Junction, then .5 mile east on Secondary 269; 1 acre, 3,300' el. (406) 542-5500]

## 22 FRENCHTOWN POND

This five-acre, spring-fed lake has a maximum depth of about ten feet. There is a swimming-diving platform a short swim from the north beach. A variety of fish—sunfish, bass, bullhead, brook trout, and rainbow trout—provide fair catches during the summer and through the ice in winter. Frenchtown Pond is also a favorite place to practice boardsailing, kayaking, canoeing, and snorkeling. [15 miles west of Missoula on I-90 at Frenchtown exit, then 1 mile west on Frontage Rd.; 41 acres, 3,000' el. (406) 542-5500]

## 23 GIANT SPRINGS

Discovered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 and one of

the largest freshwater springs in the world, Giant Springs flows at a measured 338 million gallons of water per day. Today you can picnic by the Missouri River and visit the nearby Rainbow Falls overlook, the visitor center, and the fish hatchery. A food and beverage concession and group picnic site are also available. [3 miles east of U.S. 87 on River Drive, Great Falls; 117 acres, 3,312' el. (406) 454-3441]

## 24 GRANITE

The remnants of this once thriving 1890s silver boomtown bear stark witness to Montana's boom-and-bust mining history. The Superintendent's House and Miners Union Hall have been included in the Historic American Buildings Survey. (Undeveloped.) [6 miles east of Philipsburg on forest road; 1 acre, 7,050' el. (406) 542-5500]

## 25 GREYCLIFF PRAIRIE DOG TOWN

Sheepmen and cattlemen have often fought the prairie dog, but this town of black-tailed prairie dogs has been preserved. [9 miles east of Big Timber on I-90 at Greycliff exit, 18 acres, 4,072' el. (406) 252-4654]

## 26 HELL CREEK

On the Hell Creek Arm of Fort Peck Lake, this park provides facilities for most water sports as well as excellent walleye fishing. Hell Creek also serves as a launching point for boat camping in the wild and beautiful Missouri Breaks. [25 miles north of Jordan on county road; 172 acres, 2,175' el. (406) 232-4365]

## 27 HOLTER LAKE

This is one of the few public parks on the shores of Holter Lake. Weekend campers and picnickers can find a variety of water sports available here, as well as good fishing for rainbow trout, walleye, and yellow perch. The park also serves as a jumping off point for the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness and the Beartooth Wildlife Management Areas. [2 miles north of Wolf Creek on Missouri River Rd., then 3 miles south on county road; 40 acres, 3,600' el. (406) 454-3441]

## 28 LAKE ELMO

This 64-acre reservoir is a popular swimming, boardsailing, boating (nonmotorized), and fishing area. Food, beverage, and watercraft-rental concessions are available during summer months. [In Billings, U.S. 87 north to Pemberton Lane, then .5 mile west; 123 acres, 3,195' el. (406) 256-6205 or 252-4654]

## 29 LAMBETH

Situated on Lake Mary Ronan, Lambeth is shaded by a forest of Douglas-fir and western larch. Trails lead into the surrounding area, which abounds in wildflowers and wildlife, including deer, elk, moose, bald eagles, and several kinds of waterbirds. There are private resorts within walking distance with restaurants and lounges. Attractions include lake fishing for trout, bass, and kokanee salmon, bird watching, huckleberry picking, swimming, and mushroom hunting. [U.S. 93 at Dayton, then 7 miles northwest; 76 acres, 4,000' el. (406) 849-5082 or 752-5501]

## 30 LES MASON

The only public park on the east shore of Whitefish Lake, Les Mason is heavily forested with hemlock, birch, and alder and has a picturesque gravel beach. (Undeveloped.) [4 miles north of Whitefish on Secondary 487; 8 acres, 3,100' el. (406) 752-5501]

## 31 LEWIS AND CLARK CAVERNS

Montana's first and best-known state park features one of the largest known limestone caverns in the Northwest. Naturally air conditioned, these spectacular caves, lined with stalactites, stalagmites, columns, and helictites, are electrically lighted and safe to visit. Above ground, a self-guided nature trail provides opportunities to understand the natural surroundings. Also available are a campground, picnic sites, and a food, beverage, and gift concession. The park is open with guided tours conducted daily between May 1 and September 30. [19 miles west of Three Forks on Montana 2; 2,735 acres, 5,500' el. (406) 287-3541]

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### 32 LOGAN

With frontage on the north shore of Middle Thompson Lake, Logan is heavily forested with western larch, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine. A channel connects Upper, Middle, and Lower Thompson lakes. Attractions include swimming, boating, camping, waterskiing, and fishing for rainbow trout, largemouth bass, kokanee salmon, and yellow perch. [45 miles west of Kalispell on U.S. 2; 18 acres, 3,896' el. (406) 293-7190 or 752-5501]

### 33 LONE PINE

The park offers a self-guided nature trail and several informal hiking trails, as well as horse trails and an archery range. There are three scenic overlooks that provide views from Flathead Lake to Big Mountain Ski Area. One of the overlook trails is designed for the mobility impaired. The visitor center has nature and interpretive programs and includes a 100-person-capacity meeting room that can be reserved. A group picnic shelter is also available on a reservation basis. [4 miles southwest of Kalispell on Foyes Lake Rd., then 1 mile north on Lone Pine Estates Rd.; 182 acres, 2,959' el. (406) 755-2706]

### 34 LOST CREEK

Spectacular grey limestone cliffs and pink and white granite formations rise 1,200 feet above the canyon's narrow floor. Lost Creek Falls, in the northwest corner of the park, cascades over a 50-foot drop to provide one of the most scenic and popular spots in the park. Wildlife, especially mountain goats and bighorn sheep, are frequently seen on the cliffs above. [1.5 miles east of Anaconda on Montana 1, then 2 miles north on Secondary 273, then 6 miles west; 25 acres, 6,000' el. (406) 542-5500]

### 35 MADISON BUFFALO JUMP

An outstanding example of a natural feature that allowed Native Americans to stampede herds of bison over a precipice in order to secure the necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and tools. Interpretive displays help visitors understand the dramatic events that took place here for nearly 2,000 years. [23 miles west of Bozeman on I-90 at Logan exit, then 7 miles south on Buffalo Jump Rd.; 618 acres, 4,400' el. (406) 994-4042]

### 36 MAKOSHIKA

To the Sioux Indians, Ma-ko-shi-ka meant bad earth or bad land. Today the badlands of Makoshika are set aside for visitors to see and enjoy. In addition to the pine-and-juniper-studded badlands formations, the park also houses the fossil remains of such dinosaurs as tyrannosaurus and triceratops. Included within the park are archery and shooting ranges as well as scenic drives and nature trails, a campground, a group picnic area, and many picnic sites. [On Snyder Ave. in Glendive; 8,834 acres, 2,069' el. (406) 365-8596]

### 37 MEDICINE ROCKS

As its name implies, Medicine Rocks was a place of "big medicine" where Indian hunting parties conjured up magical spirits. "As fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen," said one of its first tourists in the late 1800s, a young rancher named Teddy Roosevelt. Weathering has given the soft sandstone rock formations a Swiss-cheese look. The park is also a haven for mule deer, antelope, and sharp-tailed grouse. [25 miles south of Baker on Montana 7; 316 acres, 3,441' el. (406) 232-4365]

### 38 MISSOURI HEADWATERS

Established where Lewis and Clark discovered the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin rivers joining to form the Missouri River, Missouri Headwaters was a geographical focal point important to early Native Americans, trappers, traders, and settlers. The park provides a campground, picnic areas, foot trails to points of interest, and interpretive displays of the area's cultural and natural history. River floating and fishing are popular activities. [3 miles east of Three Forks on I-90 at Three Forks exit, then east on Secondary 205, then 3 miles north on Secondary 286; 527 acres, 4,100' (406) 994-4042]

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### 39 MISSOURI RIVER ROAD

The road meanders through 35 miles of the scenic Little Prickly Pear Creek and Missouri River canyons, providing travelers with the opportunity to fish, boat, picnic, camp, or just relax with photography and leisurely sight-seeing. There are 12 maintained sites along the road that provide boat ramps, picnic tables, fireplaces, and play areas. Trophy rainbow and brown trout in the 10-to-20-pound range can be caught in the Missouri here. [25 miles north of Helena on I-90 at Recreation Rd. exit; 52 acres, 3,455' el. (406) 454-3441]

### 40 NATURAL BRIDGE

Constrained by a deeply cut chasm during high water, the Boulder River flows over a 100-foot precipice, creating the spectacular Boulder River Falls. At low water, the river flowed under a natural rock bridge, but in July 1988, the bridge that gave the area its name collapsed. The park also serves as a wilderness trailhead and has good trout fishing. [27 miles south of Big Timber on Secondary 298; 40 acres, 5,200' el. (406) 252-4654]

### 41 NELSON

This reservoir, located near the Milk River, is popular for walleye and northern pike fishing as well as most water sports. The area is also noted for its abundant waterfowl. [17 miles east of Malta on U.S. 2, then 2 miles north on county road; 228 acres, 2,222' el. (406) 228-9347]

### 42 PAINTED ROCKS

Located in the Bitterroot Mountains, Painted Rocks Reservoir offers boating, camping, and fishing in a scenic, western pine-forest setting. [20 miles south of Hamilton on U.S. 93, then 23 miles southwest on Secondary 473; 263 acres, 4,700' el. (406) 542-5500]

### 43 PARKER HOMESTEAD

This sod-roofed log cabin is representative of the thousands of simple frontier homes that provided shelter for hopeful pioneers who settled Montana. (Undeveloped.) [8 miles west of Three Forks on Montana 2; 2 acres, 4,050' el. (406) 994-4042]

### 44 PICTOGRAPH CAVE

The Pictograph, Middle, and Ghost cave complex was home to generations of prehistoric hunters. Over 30,000 artifacts have been identified from the park. A paved .25-mile trail allows you to view the rock paintings, known as pictographs, that are still visible in Pictograph Cave, the largest of the three. Picnic sites are also provided under ancient boxelder trees. National Historic Landmark. [In Billings on I-90 at Lockwood exit, then 6 miles south on county road; 22 acres, 3,600' el. (406) 252-4654]

### 45 PIROGUE ISLAND

This typical cottonwood-covered Yellowstone River island provides a natural haven for waterfowl, bald eagles, and white-tailed and mule deer. Wildlife viewing, fishing for sauger, river floating, and Montana moss agate hunting are popular activities. [1 mile north of Miles City on Montana 22, then 2 miles east on Kinsey Rd., then 2 miles south on county road; 269 acres, 2,371' el. (406) 232-4365]

### 46 PLACID LAKE

Located on a branch of the Clearwater River, Placid Lake is known for its good trout fishing and smooth water. A number of facilities are provided for camping, picnicking, boating, and swimming. Interpretive panels give an account of the early-day logging practices attested to by the massive western larch stumps in the area. [3 miles south of Seeley Lake on Montana 83, then 3 miles west on county road; 32 acres, 4,100' el. (406) 542-5500]

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#### 47 ROSEBUD BATTLEFIELD

Site of the June 17, 1876, battle between the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians and General George Crook's cavalry and infantry. One of the largest Indian battles ever waged in the United States, it set the stage for the Indian victory eight days later when Lt. Col. George A. Custer and his immediate command were wiped out on the Little Bighorn. (Undeveloped.) [25 miles east of Crow Agency on U.S. 212, then 20 miles south on Secondary 314, then 3 miles west on county road; 3,052 acres, 4,300' el. (406) 232-4365]

#### 48 SALMON LAKE

A natural impoundment, Salmon Lake is one of the beautiful links in the chain of lakes on the Clearwater River. Fishing, boating, and a variety of water sports are popular activities in this woodland setting of western larch, ponderosa pine, and Douglas-fir. [5 miles south of Seeley Lake on Montana 83; 42 acres, 4,000' el. (406) 542-5501]

#### 49 SLUICE BOXES

The Sluice Boxes Canyon, along a portion of Belt Creek, has a scenic hiking trail along an abandoned railroad grade and excellent trout fishing. It is day-use only, with a parking lot located at Riceville, the lower end. Nearby mines and ghost towns remind you of past mining days. [15 miles south of Belt on U.S. 89, then 2 miles west on county road; 1,403 acres, 4,100' el. (406) 454-3441]

#### 50 SMITH RIVER

A 61-mile float trip down the remote Smith River Canyon provides incredible scenery and fantastic trout fishing. There are 23 boat camps along the river from the put-in point at Camp Baker to the take-out point at Eden Bridge. [16 miles northwest of White Sulphur Springs on Secondary 360, then 7 miles north on county road; 420 acres, 4,400' el. (406) 454-3441]

#### 51 SPRING MEADOW LAKE

This 30-acre, spring-fed, man-made lake on the western edge of Helena is noted for its clarity and depth. Open to nonmotorized boats only, the lake is popular for swimming, sunbathing, scuba diving, and fishing for trout, bass, and sunfish. The park is accessible to the mobility impaired. There is an .8-mile, self-guided nature trail around the lake. The park is home to a surprising variety of birds and other wildlife. [In Helena, take Euclid to Joslyn to Country Club Ave.; 56 acres, 4,157' el. (406) 444-4720]

#### 52 THOMPSON FALLS

A mature, mixed pine forest makes this a cool and private park. It is developed with drinking water, paved roads, and vault toilets. Attractions include bird watching, fishing for bass, trout, and ling, nature walks, and boating on Noxon Rapids Reservoir. A boat ramp is located nearby on Montana 200. [1 mile northwest of Thompson Falls on Montana 200, milepost 50; 36 acres, 2,473' el. (406) 827-3732 or 752-5501]

#### 53 TONGUE RIVER RESERVOIR

The impounded Tongue River provides a 12-mile long reservoir set in the scenic red shale and juniper canyons and open prairies of southeastern Montana. Boating and other water sports are popular here, and the park boasts excellent bass, crappie, walleye, and northern pike fishing. Four state record fish have been pulled from its waters. [6 miles north of Decker on Secondary 314, then 1 mile east on county road; 640 acres, 3,424' el. (406) 232-4365]

#### 54 ULM PISHKUN

This prehistoric bison kill site consists of a mile-long buffalo jump, or pishkun, thought to be the largest in the United States. The park has an interpretive trail, shelters, picnic tables, fireplaces, and a protected black-tailed prairie dog town. [10 miles south of Great Falls on I-15 at Ulm Exit, then 4 miles northwest on county road; 170 acres, 3,700' el. (406) 454-3441.]

#### 55 WAYFARERS

Located on the northeast shore of Flathead Lake, a mature, mixed forest makes this site very pleasant for both camping and picnicking.

From spring to late fall the area abounds in wildflowers. Nature walks over the rocky shoreline to the cliffs are popular with photographers for the excellent view of Flathead Lake. The nearby town of Bigfork is known for its Summer Playhouse, gift shops, restaurants, and private resorts. [.5 mile south of Bigfork on Montana 35; 68 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 837-4196 or 752-5501]

#### 56 WEST SHORE

Here glacially carved rock outcrops rise from Flathead Lake to overlooks with spectacular views of the lakeshore and the Swan and Mission mountains. The beach is rocky, but swimming and boating are popular. A mature Douglas-fir forest also makes this a cool and private park. [20 miles south of Kalispell on U.S. 93; 146 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 844-3901 or 752-5501]

#### 57 WHITEFISH LAKE

A mature woodland contributes to this pleasant, secluded campground and beach. Boating, swimming, and fishing can be enjoyed the entire season. Whitefish Lake is rarely windy, often providing glassy conditions for waterskiing. Looking north across the lake, you can see the ski runs of Big Mountain. The nearby city of Whitefish is a year-round resort, with the Whitefish Golf Course within walking distance of the park. Good restaurants and motel accommodations are also available in the city. [.5 mile west of Whitefish on U.S. 93, then 1 mile north; 10 acres, 2,995' el. (406) 862-3991 or 752-5501]

#### 58 WILD HORSE ISLAND

The largest island in Flathead Lake, Wild Horse Island has been a landmark since the Salish-Kutenai Indians were reported to have used it to pasture horses to keep them from being stolen by other tribes. The park is noted for its wildlife including bighorn sheep, mule deer, songbirds, waterfowl, bald eagles, and falcons, as well as three wild horses. Rare and endangered plant species have also been found on its Palouse Prairie grasslands. The island's scenic shoreline is a favorite of hikers, boaters, swimmers, and sailboat enthusiasts. Day-use only is allowed, and there are other strict rules to ensure maintenance of its natural character. (Undeveloped) [Access from Big Arm (see 6) via boat to Little Sheeko Bay on northwest side of island; 2,163 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 752-5501]

#### 59 WILD MISSOURI RIVER SITES

This 149-mile stretch of river, under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River in 1976 because of its rich wildlife, scenic, historic, and recreation values. A priceless remnant of primitive America, the free-flowing upper Missouri remains much the same as it was when Lewis and Clark explored it in 1805. The Parks Division provides 5 boat camps under a cooperative agreement. [5 miles southwest of Big Sandy on U.S. 87, then 7 miles south on county road to Coal Banks Landing; 500 acres, 2,800' el. (406) 454-3441.]

#### 60 YELLOW BAY

Yellow Bay is in the heart of the famous Montana sweet cherry orchards. Cherry blossoms color the hillsides during spring. In the summer, cherries can be purchased at nearby roadside stands or "U-Pick" orchards. The park includes Yellow Bay Creek and a wide, gravelly beach. Among its attractions are boating, lake trout fishing, waterskiing, bird watching, swimming, camping, and scuba diving. [15 miles north of Polson on Montana 35; 10 acres, 2,917' el. (406) 982-3291 or 752-5501]



## Park Facilities and Features

1	Ackley Lake	R			*		*	*	*	*			*			*		*
2	Anaconda Smelter Stack*	C																
3	Bannack	C	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*			*		*
4	Bears Paw Battlefield	C	*	*			*	*	*				*					
5	Beaverhead Rock*	C																
6	Beavertail Hill	R			*	*	*	*	*	*						*	*	*
7	Big Arm	R			*	*	*	*	*	*			*			*	*	*
8	Big Pine	N					*	*	*	*						*		*
9	Blackfoot River	R			*		*	*	*	*			*			*	*	*
10	Black Sandy	R	*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*			*	*	*
11	Canyon Ferry	R		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
12	Chief Plenty Coups	C	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*			*		*
13	Clark's Lookout*	C																
14	Cooney	R	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*			*	*	*
15	Council Grove	C	*	*		*	*	*	*	*						*		*
16	Deadman's Basin	R				*	*	*	*	*			*			*	*	*
17	East Gallatin*	R																
18	Elkhorn*	C																
19	Elmo	R			*	*	*	*	*	*			*			*	*	*
20	Finley Point	R			*	*	*	*	*	*						*	*	*
21	Fort Owen	C		*			*											
22	Frenchtown Pond	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*	*	*
23	Giant Springs	N	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
24	Granite*	C																
25	Greycliff Prairie Dog Town	N	*	*														
26	Hell Creek	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
27	Holter Lake	R			*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
28	Lake Elmo	R					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
29	Lambeth	R			*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
30	Les Mason*	R																
31	Lewis and Clark Cavens	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
32	Logan	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
33	Lone Pine	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
34	Lost Creek	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
35	Madison Buffalo Jump	C	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
36	Makoshika	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
37	Medicine Rocks	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
38	Missouri Headwaters	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
39	Missouri River Road	R	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
40	Natural Bridge	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
41	Nelson	R				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
42	Painted Rocks	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
43	Parker Homestead*	C																
44	Pictograph Cave	C	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
45	Pirogue Island	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
46	Placid Lake	R	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
47	Rosebud Battlefield*	C																
48	Salmon Lake	R	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
49	Sluice Boxes	N				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
50	Smith River	N				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
51	Spring Meadow Lake	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
52	Thompson Falls	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
53	Tongue River Reservoir	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
54	Ulm Pishkun	C	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
55	Wayfarers	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
56	West Shore	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
57	Whitefish Lake	R			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
58	Wild Horse Island*	N														*	*	*
59	Wild Missouri River	N	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
60	Yellow Bay	R	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

- Undeveloped
- Features available
- \* Features available and accessible to the physically disabled

N - Natural  
C - Cultural  
R - Recreation



## INTRODUCTION

The State Park Futures Committee was appointed by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in August 1989 with approval of Governor Stephens and legislative leaders to make recommendations to the Governor, the 52nd Legislature, and the Fish and Game Commission about the proper role, priorities, and funding for state parks.

The committee met 11 times throughout the state to consider the issues and develop its recommendations. On fact-finding trips it visited more than 20 of Montana's most significant state parks. It also held public meetings in 15 towns, meeting with over 500 people representing over 70 groups, conducted a statewide newspaper survey and received uncounted letters and phone calls.

It was apparent that there is a good deal of public interest in, concern for, and a willingness to support the State Park System.

The committee was impressed with the richness of the natural, cultural, and recreational treasures which make up the system. It was also impressed with the quality and dedication of parks employees and volunteers.

We were disturbed by the serious daily management problems facing the system as well as the all too apparent threats to the preservation of these irreplaceable properties. We felt a sense of loss over the missed opportunities to educate our youth, enrich our lives, and to capitalize on the obvious potential for parks to be a much more significant contributor to our economy.

In the end we were encouraged to find that the answers to these problems are available, the solutions are attainable, and that it is not too late to save these priceless resources. We found that the traditional methods of operation were often ineffective. Innovative and creative approaches have been developed and used on individual park areas and can be broadened to improve the entire State Park System.

What is needed most is sufficient financial support to turn the tide in what is now a losing battle and to broaden the scope, level, and priority of park management in Montana.

This report synthesizes what the committee learned from professionals inside and outside the department, from the public, from a good look at the parks, from literature review of the experiences of other state park systems, and from each other. We believe our recommendations are practical, attainable, cost-effective in the long run, are in the public interest, and will earn public support.

All committee members endorse the report and have signed it. Most of its recommendations were adopted unanimously. In the case of funding the committee agreed to suggest prioritized options which the majority approved even though one or more members did not. This was done to provide a broad spectrum of options which were believed most appropriate.

*The committee acknowledges the fine work of Mr. L. E. Surles, Recreation Management Opportunities, Inc., for two studies of the financing and management of the State Park System (State Park System Financial Review, and State Park System Plan Draft) which are included in the Appendix. It has endorsed and advanced a number of Mr. Surles' concepts and recommendations. His meeting with the committee was also very enlightening and helpful.*





## BACKGROUND

The State Park System celebrated its Golden Anniversary in conjunction with Montana's Centennial in 1989.

Since its beginning in 1939 with the acceptance of Lewis and Clark Caverns from the federal government, the Montana State Park System has had the chronic problem of insufficient funding and management resources to properly carry out its responsibilities. Ironically, even the caverns could not begin operations without private capital to provide such basic public services as drinking water.

In the six decades since, the system has grown in response to public demands to include: 15 Natural Parks such as Lost Creek; 15 Cultural Parks like Bannack, Montana's first territorial capital; and 30 Recreational Parks, mostly located on lakes like Flathead and Canyon Ferry; a total system of over 30,000 acres.

State parks receive 3 million visits annually. That exceeds both Glacier and Yellowstone national parks which in 1989 received 1.8 million and 2.6 million visitors respectively.

**Out-of-state visitors to Montana's state parks contribute almost \$45 million to Montana's economy which supports 1,500 private sector jobs. When compared to the parks' current annualized expenditure of \$2.3 million for operations and \$1.3 million for improvements, spending by out-of-state visitors to Montana's state parks represents a ten-to-one return on this investment.**

The increase in number to the present 60 parks has always out-paced both development of facilities and management. The number would be larger except for department resistance to further expansion particularly since 1985.

Since the mid-1970s while the system grew by 16 parks and visitation doubled, real spending power remained flat due to inflation.

This chronic problem became acute in the mid 1980s when Montana's economic downturn, falling interest earnings, and other factors caused the state budget crisis. In subsequent legislative budget balancing efforts state parks lost over \$624,000 per year through the elimination of general fund support and saw the parks coal tax trust temporarily capped. These two acts alone reduced parks budgets almost \$1,000,000 per year. During the same period the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund was cut to 1/20 th its former amount.

The cuts, compounded by the affects of inflation, led to a cutback in operations, a moratorium on capital maintenance, and construction of replacement facilities. Plans for developing and opening several previously acquired parks were suspended and opportunities to acquire more parks were resisted despite outside pressures.

In an effort to earn more revenue the Fish and Game Commission initiated an entrance fee system in 1989. It was a catch-22 situation . . . money was needed to improve facilities and management, but without improvements support for user fees was seriously eroded. The department also lacked personnel and site control to provide complete and equitable collection. The fees added about \$300,000 per year but raised only about half of what was expected.

The 1989 legislature appropriated \$2.6 million from a variety of sources, some one-time only opportunities, to repair and add basic facilities and to help ease the transition to the newly adopted entrance fee system.

Even with the new fees the parks operating budget of \$2.3 million ranks near the bottom among the fifty states, and at \$0.49 per visitor it spends only about 1/3 as much as North Dakota or the National Park Service. Put another way, Montana spends \$25,000 per park while North Dakota spends \$66,000 and Colorado spends \$145,000.

Montana's Parks Division (and other divisions within the department which use park funds in support of parks) currently spends from three primary sources: parks earned revenue (36%), coal tax (36%), and motor boat fuel taxes (28%).

Montana's park fees support about the same percentage (36%) of the total budget as is the case in other park systems throughout the nation. Nearly every other state provides General Fund support... **Montana does not.**

The primitive condition of our parks not only deprives users of needed facilities and a quality experience. It also severely erodes revenue earning capability. Consider... we are one of 5 states which offer no modern camp sites with electrical and water service, unlike most we do not offer cabins or lodge units for rent, we rank 48th in spending per visitor and share with Wyoming the distinction of having no fixed outlay for capital construction of user facilities. Consequently, Montana ranks last in the nation in the amount of revenue it is able to earn per visitor.

Additionally, Montana has sacrificed its land acquisition program. It has given up the ability to protect existing parks from the threats of incompatible use on critical inholdings and adjoining lands. It has lost the opportunity to bring important new properties into the system. Montana, at 0.005% of its total area devoted to state parks, has less than any other state in the union except North Dakota (0.004%).

At 43 full-time and 140 seasonal employees, Montana's staff is one of the smallest in the nation.

Despite its problems, the Montana State Park System embodies a wealth of natural and cultural treasures unsurpassed in the nation.



It holds a representation virtually of every major historic theme. For example:

**Prehistoric archaeological sites . . .**

Pictograph Cave, Madison Buffalo Jump, and others;

**Lewis and Clark Expedition . . .**

Giant Springs, Great Falls of the Missouri, Missouri River Headwaters, Beaverhead Rock, and others;

**First Permanent White Settlement . . .**

Fort Owen;

**Indian Wars . . .**

Rosebud Battlefield, Chief Joseph Battleground of the Bear's Paw;

**1855 Treaty site . . .**

Council Grove;

**Indian/white cooperation . . .**

Chief Plenty Coups' homestead;

**Mining, commerce, railroads . . .**

Sluice Boxes, Elkhorn, Granite, and others;

**First territorial capitol . . .**

Bannack;

**Industry . . .**

Anaconda Stack.

**Natural wonders at:**

Medicine Rocks; Makoshika; Lewis and Clark Caverns; Wild Horse Island and other Flathead Lake parks; Lost Creek.

**Unsurpassed recreation . . .**

on most of the major lakes and reservoirs in the state. These are limited, highly prized, water resources to which state parks often provides the only public access.

These parks offer Montanans and our guests a sense of our own history and identity, provide places of learning and inspiration, and opportunities for "re-creation" and revitalization in the most beautiful surroundings available anywhere.

Our state parks provide a dramatic visual measure of the quality of life and style to which we aspire. They represent the things we treasure. In many ways the care which we give them is a reflection of the maturity of our society.

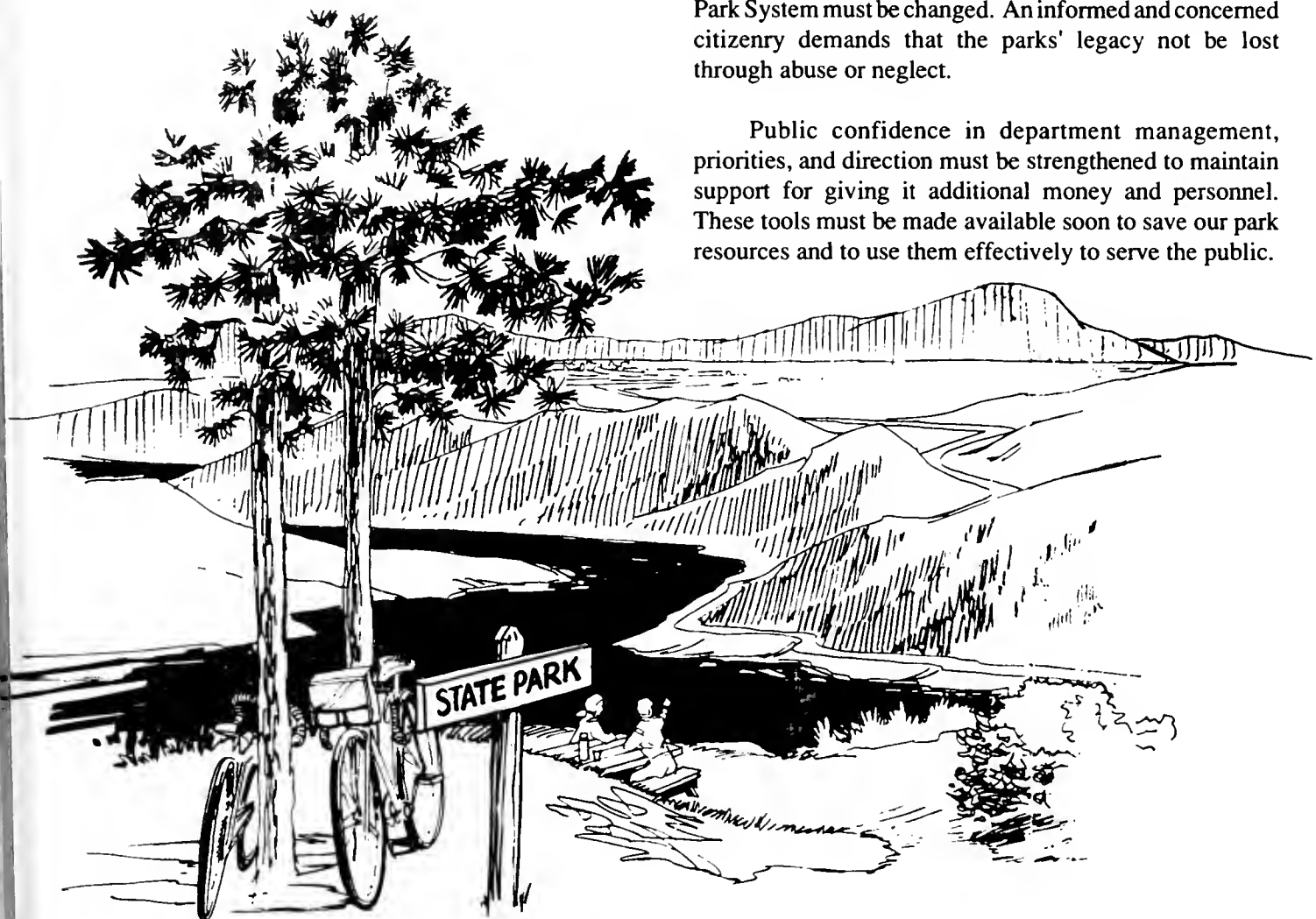
This wealth is not being used to our advantage now, and of more concern, may be compromised or even lost if present trends are not reversed. Vandalism and other degradation of irreplaceable resources is alarmingly evident in many of the parks the committee visited. The longer we wait to address these problems, the more it will cost and the less there will be left to salvage.

The committee found that while the department is very creative in stretching scarce resources over 60 parks, it may not always be effective in directing its resources to the highest priority needs. The present system lacks a clear sense of long-term direction and mission which the public understands and supports.

Consequently, the department has been vulnerable to outside pressures to accept areas that could be better managed by others and to adopt priorities which have popular local support but which do not necessarily address the long-term high priority needs of the park system. While this approach has resulted in many worthwhile projects, it has added to the burden, misdirected funding and effort, and added to the public's confusion about the identity and purpose of the State Park System.

These facts, together with the interest demonstrated at our public meetings, lead to the inescapable conclusion that it is time for action. These disturbing trends in the State Park System must be changed. An informed and concerned citizenry demands that the parks' legacy not be lost through abuse or neglect.

Public confidence in department management, priorities, and direction must be strengthened to maintain support for giving it additional money and personnel. These tools must be made available soon to save our park resources and to use them effectively to serve the public.





## THE MISSION

The committee started its work by examining the parks' legislative mandate . . .

### The Enabling Act . . .

The 1939 Legislature provided the foundation upon which the State Park System has been built. Title 23, Chapter 1, Part 1 of the Montana Code begins with a statement of its purpose . . .

*"For the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing for their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health . . ." (23-1-101)*

## THE VISION

The Enabling Act is a very broad mandate. One of the committee's first tasks was to add definition, structure, and standards around which the committee's and the public's vision of the ideal State Park System for Montana could be developed and managed.

### The Vision . . .

*"A State Park System which protects Montana's significant natural and cultural heritage, enhances peoples' well-being, provides high quality and accessible recreational opportunities for Montanans and visitors, and is appropriately managed to improve the economy through tourism.*

*Such a park system is characterized by:*

*1) Its legacy of natural, cultural, and recreational resources remaining undiminished and not degrading over time;*

*2) Its natural and cultural resources being the best representative examples of statewide significance;*

*3) Its recreational resources being rural in setting and at least of regional significance;*

*4) Management policies which are guided by professionally and publicly developed long-range park management plans to assure proper stewardship in perpetuity;*

*5) Park land acquisition and disposal which assure that appropriate resources are added and inappropriate ones are removed on a long-term planned basis;*

*6) Management which adheres to uniform identity and quality standards of resource protection, facility construction and maintenance, and public service;*

*7) Public use facilities which are appropriate, safe, clean, and accessible;*

*8) Educational, interpretive, and informational services which adhere to uniform identity and quality standards;*

*9) Innovative and creative management techniques which make the best uses of outside assistance such as volunteers and cooperative relationships such as federal and local governments, the private sector, and with other interests;*

*10) Professional staff who provide Montana's leadership in park management and who develop working collaborations and technical assistance among other park providers;*

*11) A strong, positive image and an organizational structure which is readily identifiable, accountable, and responsive to Montanans;*

*12) Being affordable to Montanans;*

*13) Being an essential element of the tourism industry "network."*

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## THE REALITY

How does our present park system compare against the standard described in the Vision? . . .

### The Reality . . .

In its visits to more than 20 of the most significant parks across the state, the committee observed emergency need for historic structure stabilization at Bannack and Chief Plenty Coups Memorial, found vandalism of natural and cultural features at Lewis and Clark Caverns and The Madison Buffalo Jump, and saw evidence of uncontrolled and excessive use at Canyon Ferry as well as erosion which is threatening irreplaceable resources at Yellow Bay, to cite just a few examples.

At Finley Point, Cooney, Black Sandy, and elsewhere we noted serious human health and safety problems due to lack of proper facility development and timely maintenance and management control of natural features.

The committee noted a lack of even the most basic inventory of park resources. There are no comprehensive surveys of the paleontological, archaeological, historical, geological, biological, or other values it manages. Thus, staff cannot protect, much less make them available to the public for education and enjoyment.

The department appears to be doing what it can, but it is losing the battle through lack of professional manpower, specialized expertise, and funds to deal with these problems. Since the decline of these resources is often not dramatic, it goes unnoticed by the public who pressure the department and the legislature to give priority to more visible projects offering immediate user benefits.

The system does contain some of the most important treasures of the state . . . places like Wild Horse Island, Makoshika, Missouri Headwaters, and many others. But it also is responsible for parks which are of questionable statewide significance and which would be more appropriately managed by others. They are in the system because local jurisdictions could not afford them and the state was looked upon as a deep pocket.

The department does not have a comprehensive, publicly developed, formally adopted body of management policies to provide the long-term direction or day to day

management . . . though much of what is needed is in draft form. Employees spend their energies on the demands of day to day management because of a lack of proper facilities and scheduled cyclic maintenance. It appears necessary to spend a disproportionate amount of time responding to such things as stopgap health and safety needs of users.

The system's history of growth appears to have been guided by opportunism and political pressure rather than by a systematic evaluation of the state's resources, contrary to original legislative intent. The Coal Tax Park Acquisition Program, for example, added appropriate areas like the Rosebud Battlefield, but also ones like East Gallatin at Bozeman which may not fit the state park mission.

The public is skeptical of any immediate park land disposal. It mistrusts the department in the absence of a well-defined long-range plan. It is worried about who, if not the department, has the capability to better manage parks which serve local park needs.

The Acquisition Program is now defunct because all parks coal tax trust revenue is going to management to cover the withdrawal of general fund support. This is a serious blow at a time when inholdings threaten the integrity of parks like Lewis and Clark Caverns, Bannack, and others; while important resources outside the system, like White Sandy beach on Hauser Lake, are in imminent danger of being developed by their owners and lost to the public.

The State Park System lacks clearly identifiable and consistently applied appearance and quality standards. Camping facilities, for example, vary widely, not only across the state from park to park, but also within a park where one can find several kinds of tables, stoves, space allocations, and camp pads or their absence, even though the cost to the user and his needs and expectations do not change.

Truly barrier-free access for the handicapped is almost nonexistent. The committee applauds the department's newly drafted Handicapped Access Plan which will address this problem if funding is made available.

Bank erosion, lack of trail maintenance, run-down facilities and water systems which do not meet current health standards are basic problems throughout the park system.



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Educational and interpretive facilities are likewise lacking or in need of repair. Lewis and Clark Caverns, for example, which has a high-quality guided tour, has, for several years, had nonoperative audio/video equipment in both of its primary public contact points due to lack of replacement funds. We found the same problem at the Chief Plenty Coups Museum.

In many places interpretive signs, which when installed were high-quality and informative, are now gone or heavily damaged from vandalism. The site security to protect them, and the money to replace them, is not available. Many parks have developed brochures but lack effective methods of dispensing them, or the funds to print them in sufficient quantity or to update them.

The system, as a whole, is falling far short of its potential to educate, inspire, and inform park users of our heritage.

In response to extremely limited resources, park managers have developed an impressive array of innovative partnerships and creative techniques. The system lacks mechanisms, other than poverty, for encouraging their development and use, and staff for researching and sharing this knowledge.

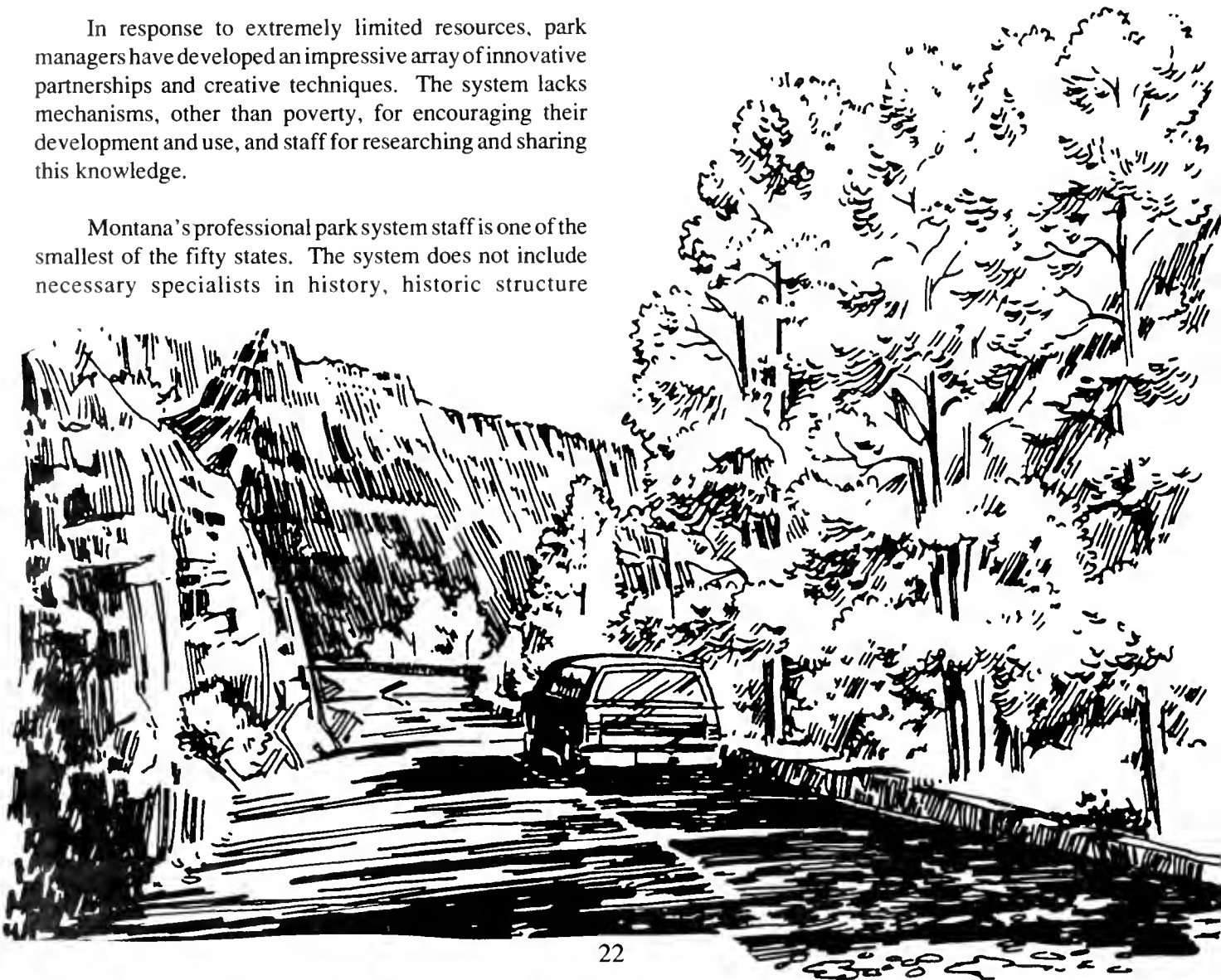
Montana's professional park system staff is one of the smallest of the fifty states. The system does not include necessary specialists in history, historic structure

preservation, archaeology, natural sciences, media, interpretation, and many others. Its few management level employees are routinely called upon to provide all of these services in addition to providing basic management. The committee was impressed with them individually and as a group.

There is an equal amount of talent and dedication among the seasonal employees and volunteers. We met one young woman who has returned each summer for 14 years to a job that pays about \$7.60 per hour. She, alone at her park, gives guided tours, collects the fees, enforces the rules, picks up the garbage, cleans the toilets, waters and mows the grass, and controls the weeds. She and Montana's bicentennial park, The Missouri Headwaters, deserve better.

### **Montanans deserve better.**

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## THE BARRIERS BETWEEN THE REALITY AND THE VISION

Clearly, the park system does not mirror the committee's vision of what it should and could be. The committee's reading of public attitude is that it should. Why doesn't it?

We found conditions which we recognized as barriers which must be overcome, or problems which need to be solved, for the park vision to be realized. The barriers fall into the general categories of:

**Role**  
**Long-Range Planning**  
**Management**  
**Image and Marketing**  
**Funding**

These matters were considered at considerable length and in some detail. The committee called upon outside experts—the public—and tested these observations with inspections in the parks. We spent many hours with department personnel from all levels of management and drew from a considerable body of literature and reports. The committee used an independent consultant/facilitator to assure impartial, efficient, and thorough discussion and an accurate recording of the results.

### ROLE

The 1939 enabling legislation defined the broad mission for the State Park System. It is so broad, in fact, that it provides little guidance for focusing the efforts of the department. The range of scope and quality of Montana's resources make it imperative that a clearly defined selection process be used to choose the areas to be managed by the department. The options to use other public and private resource managers as partners, the pragmatic limits of budgets, manpower, and others make it imperative that Montanans define the proper niche for the State Park System.

The committee did not find that this had been done. Its Vision Statement is intended to fill that need.

It is particularly important that the State Park System's niche, or role, be accepted and understood by the public. Without public involvement at this level, support is severely diminished. The department is whipsawed into, or assumes, inappropriate responsibilities which drain its resources and further confuse the public about its purpose.

The committee saw draft documents which classify park lands and provide a prescription for their selection and management. They do not, however, provide a vision of the system as a whole, but rather prescribe the component parts. These appear to be sound, professional documents which could be made more meaningful with the inclusion of the Vision Statement. They have not been, but should be, offered for public comment and formally adopted.

### LONG-RANGE PLANNING

It is clear to the committee through its public meetings that a parks legacy is important to our way of life, our well-being and to Montana's economy. The public is concerned about, and is dissatisfied with the condition and management of our state parks.

Clearly, much public misinformation exists about our State Park System. This is partly because publicly developed long-range plans have not been developed.

Work of the department on long-range planning specifically involving park classification, setting of priorities, and the State Park System plan have lain dormant, apparently due to a lack of staff and funds and perhaps to a lack of commitment to complete them.

The department lacks comprehensive inventories of the park system's natural and cultural resources and lacks site specific management plans for many of its parks.

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At the same time, however, there is department-led public discussion about disposing of some parks. This is making people very nervous and we heard about their concerns in all of our public meetings.

Strong public opinion recommends against disposal of any sites pending adequate citizen review and completion of the State Park System plan. The public would accept mothballing of some sites if necessary to maintain the status quo until an adequate review is completed.

Montana's legislative mandate is not being honored and the public's needs and expectations are not being met with regard to public services currently available at our state parks. Many lack basic security, informational, interpretive, and educational services. Facilities are often inadequate, old and in need of repair, and some present risks to health and safety.

There are examples of quality facilities and service at some parks. But it appears to the committee that through a combination of a lack of long-range plans and consistent standards, and a shortage of personnel and funding these successes are more often the exception than the norm for the system. Quality standards are being developed by the department but the results are not yet evident at many parks.

The lack of the necessary plans and the identification of priorities masks the true needs, cripples efforts to mobilize public support to address these problems, and may result in misdirecting the limited management resources which are available to the department.



## MANAGEMENT

During the course of its recent discussions the committee was encouraged by the strongly expressed commitment to parks by Director K. L. Cool and his deputies, and by members of the Fish and Game Commission. Long-vacant planning and administrative staff positions in the Parks Division, lost during previous budget cuts, are being filled and a new position has been created in the director's office to deal with priority recreation issues. This progress has been made without much needed budget relief.

This shifts more emphasis to leadership, policy development, and planning. The committee applauds this apparent change in management emphasis.

Public perception is a problem statewide. In almost every public meeting there was concern about the proper administrative home for parks. People frequently suggested that parks was treated as a step-child to fish and wildlife interests. It is felt that usually the marriage is encouraged and supported only when it is for the purpose of parks supporting fish and wildlife needs.

Several organizational options were suggested by the public . . . an independent parks agency, combining parks with tourism and commerce, combining parks with State Lands or returning parks to the Department of Highways, to cite common examples.

There seemed to be a lack of sufficient department interface with the public about parks matters and it was clear that the public expected more frequent opportunities to express its concerns.

There are serious and widespread misconceptions about funding. Public perception is that the department is well-off financially and all that is needed to fund the parks program is for the department to share its hunting and fishing license revenues. It would appear that parks has trouble securing its own legitimate funding because of these misconceptions.

Historically, there appears to have been a lack of appreciation or understanding internally about the difference in needs and approach to managing **nonrenewable park and cultural resources as opposed to renewable wildlife resources.**

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This has been evidenced by an apparent lack of a sense of urgency to address park matters when choices were made in assigning park crews to headquarter maintenance or other tasks in support of the fish and wildlife programs instead of to park maintenance. As a result irreplaceable park resources continued to go unattended while the "more important" business of the rest of the department was addressed by park crews. The public believes that parks needs are too frequently subordinated to the needs of the rest of the department.

The perception exists that "parks" is not adequately represented at the policy level in the department. An example often cited was that there is no formal representation for parks required of Fish and Game Commission membership and indeed the very name of the commission reinforces this perception.

Parks professionals reported that they are not able to interact with other professionals outside the state or achieve the professional stature that fish and wildlife professions enjoy as a result of their out-of-state professional contacts. The department has indicated that this is largely a budget problem faced by all divisions.

The public perceives that fish and wildlife programs are promoted and supported by the department far more than are parks programs. Parks resources, particularly the historic, scientific, and cultural, are not being used to advantage by schools or by the tourism public.

The public is thoroughly confused about the jurisdiction and management responsibilities, and the purpose for various department lands such as Fishing Access Sites, Wildlife Management Areas, and Parks.

The public perceives an apparent artificial stratification of department employees. For example, a question often asked was, "Why are wardens not used more to enforce parks regulations?"

The State Park System and its employees have a muddled and confusing identity. As a group, parks employees lack stature and a positive professional image. This may be due at least in part to the fact that their jobs are viewed as largely "caretaker" positions. This perception is often reinforced by the lack of visible professional management services in parks; by employee uniforms that are nondescript, lack a professional crispness and do not look sharp; and by the lack of involvement at the professional

level with peers in other agencies, the academic world, and communities.

In contrast, as individuals, parks employees receive highly complimentary endorsement by people who know them, know their work, and their commitment to it.

The problem is compounded by the array of roles parks employees must assume. To cite one example, Fish and Game wardens are only providing a small fraction of the enforcement and public contact needs of parks. The balance of park enforcement rightly must come from park professionals who presently are too few in number, and almost totally without the training and equipment to do the job.

A second example involves the loss of Parks Division staff expertise in the field of interpretive services. This staff expertise was reassigned to the Field Services Division in the previous administration as part of reorganization and budget relief for the Parks Division. This work is too important to the mandate of the park system to subordinate it to the rest of the department.

Another example involves the almost total absence in many parks of professional interpretive and educational effort, and the near absence of outreach and interpretive programs for schools, the traveling public, and the tourism industry. These services are the mark of a truly mature and appropriate park service to the public. Without them the value of park resources to the present generation is largely being wasted, is going unappreciated and consequently may be lost through ignorance.

The department's organizational structure appears to have allowed too much individual autonomy among regional supervisors for park purposes. Historically, many were not professionally qualified or professionally motivated to assess the significance and needs of the parks component of the department. The present complement of regional supervisors appears to have much better awareness of and sensitivity to parks needs.

There is also a lack of parks program policy guidance at the Helena headquarters level to direct field effort on a statewide basis. (This has been at least in part due to previously vacant staff positions now filled.) Lack of policy has created a vacuum which is filled by supervisors who historically have not been trained in park management and have had their own priorities. These factors appear to

have affected park employee morale, caused confusion among the public about accountability, and resulted in a lack of consistent disciplined adherence to existing parks plans, policies, and priorities. Often these seem to have been subordinated to other department interests by being undeveloped, unused, or changed based upon the preferences of individuals.

The committee has been assured that these practices are changing through direction from the director, through new field staff appointments, and the filling of vacant positions which will accelerate policy development.



## IMAGE AND MARKETING

Montana's state parks and its employees are generally perceived poorly by the public.

The committee found that this poor image results from problems in five general areas:

### 1) Appearance . . .

Employees and parks do not exhibit high and consistent standards.

### 2) Identity . . .

The public is confused and misinformed about the mission, sites, administration, responsibilities, and funding of state parks.

### 3) Promotion . . .

There are no clearly identified marketing plans, promotional materials are inadequate and poorly distributed, and the public is confused and uninformed about the parks and facilities available to them.

### 4) Leadership . . .

Historically, there has been a lack of sufficient attention to parks within the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Governor's office, and the Legislature. This vacuum has contributed to the general decay of the Park System.

### 5) Funding . . .

Funding is both a root cause and a symptom of the problem. Chronic under-funding is a substantial reason for the traditional lack of attention given to state parks' image and marketing needs. This has precipitated a lack of public pride in, or even awareness of, the system's value and potential. Consequently, its legitimate funding needs are not recognized.

As a result, Montana is not capitalizing on the social and economic benefits which can flow from a strong State Park System.

Because of the questionable image and a serious lack of a marketing strategy it is very difficult to generate vital support among the general public and other cooperators in the public and private sectors.

The Park System's low profile and lack of a clear identity is also masking the severity of present degradation of significant and irreplaceable resources.

Montana has almost completely overlooked the economic value of the State Park System. Even in its present under-developed condition, the Park System could be more effectively used through networking with other tourism providers and promotional activities to augment economic benefits currently identified.

The committee was encouraged by the new partnership initiatives presently being pursued by the department and the Montana Promotions Division of the Department of Commerce. The Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism has been expanded to include Fish, Wildlife and Parks involvement, promotion of the State Park System appears to have support from the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council, and better coverage of parks in their promotional materials is being coordinated.

The State Park System contains treasures of national as well as state significance. We have an obligation to protect, interpret, and share them not only to the present generation of Americans but for America's future publics.

**Failure to share this wealth of natural and cultural history with Montana's own educational community is a final indictment of our marketing efforts.** That we would let go to waste these important opportunities to enlighten and inspire our youth makes society poorer by our inaction. To deprive our children of the privilege of experiencing historical, cultural, and scientific treasures that lay within our state's boundaries is unconscionable.

In most parks, employees, often the only employee on duty, must dump the garbage, clean the toilets, mow the weeds, repair the facilities, collect the fees, enforce the rules, as well as provide information and park interpretive services. Often they provide their own vehicles and temporary housing on site. While the people the committee met and interviewed were highly motivated and dedicated, we recognized that under current conditions it is impossible for them to overcome the enormous workloads, serve the user public effectively, and present a more desirable park image.

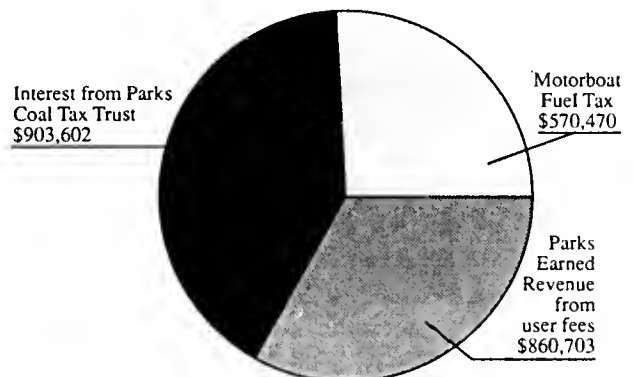
## FUNDING

### Current Funding

The Parks Division was appropriated \$2,896,131 for operations for July 1, 1990, through June 30, 1991. Funding came from four primary sources:

<b>Interest from Parks Coal Tax Trust</b>	<b>\$903,602</b>
(1.27% of tax builds trust corpus)	
<b>Parks Earned Revenue from user fees</b>	<b>\$1,180,172</b>
(Entrance, camping, cabin, concession, etc.)	
<b>Motorboat Fuel Tax</b>	<b>\$570,470</b>
(9/10 of one per cent of 20 cent/gallon gas tax)	
<b>Federal Matching</b>	<b>\$241,887</b>
(for the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC))	

**However, the actual operations budget is only \$2,334,775.**



Fee-earning shortfall caused a cut of \$319,469 in the earned revenue account. This cut made it impossible to implement the MCC for which an additional \$241,887 in matching funds was lost. The total \$561,356 cut represents a 19% reduction in an already very austere budget.

### The consequences of this cut are severe:

- Montana Conservation Corps Program not implemented
- No replacement of capital equipment such as mowers, etc.
- No park major facility and utility maintenance
- No statewide signing program
- Cuts in field operations at low-earning and non-fee parks

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**The long-term consequences of continuing to operate at this level will be even more serious:**

### **Implications of No New Funding**

The park system continues to degrade at current funding levels.

#### **No New Capital**

1. The current deterioration of the park system would be accelerated. Roads, water and septic systems, toilets, boat ramps—all park facilities—would continue to crumble.

2. Continued resource damage such as bank erosion at Flathead Lake, Cooney; historic structure collapse, Bannack; cultural resource degradation, Rosebud Battlefield and Chief Plenty Coups would accelerate.

3. Visitor safety will decline causing closure of parts of, or entire sites due to water contamination, physical hazards such as lack of tree maintenance, road washouts, unsafe boat ramps, unusable restrooms, etc. Entrance may be restricted to walk-in only to many sites.

4. Lack of site control will result in poor visitor security resulting in thefts, assaults, and nuisance behavior.

5. Benefits to the tourism industry would be non-existent or even negative.

6. Recreational demands of the public would not be met and quality of life for Montana would decline.

7. Inholdings could destroy current park resource and recreational values through incompatible uses.

#### **No New Equipment**

1. Within four years, only 25% of all small equipment will be operable. This includes weed eaters, lawnmowers, and chainsaws. This will hinder the ability to mow lawns, cut noxious weeds, and clear brush or tree hazards around park sites.

2. Riding lawnmowers, snowplows, generators for running small hand tools, and trailers have a five-to ten-year life. With no ongoing replacement program, mowing, painting, and other basic site maintenance would virtually cease after ten years.

3. Large equipment like backhoes, dump trucks, etc. have a ten plus year life. But without the funds to keep up with repairs of even older equipment, and the problems of excessive down time, operations at remote park sites are not efficient or cost-effective. And, without the support of the smaller equipment, their usefulness would be minimal. Many parks have no heavy equipment now.

### **Operation and Maintenance**

1. Fees could no longer be charged on some or many sites due to lack of services, inoperative facilities, and lack of collection personnel.

2. Employee layoffs would be necessary. On-site presence would be reduced or eliminated.

3. Restroom maintenance would not be continued at an approved health and safety level, therefore, toilets would be removed from many sites or closed.

4. All sites would be considered for pack in pack out trash removal.

5. Weed control would not keep pace with infestation thus creating an infectious area impacting surrounding lands in violation of the state weed law.

6. Safety/enforcement staff would be cut, increasing visitor and department liability thus causing possible park closures.

7. Services would be virtually eliminated on many sites, especially remote sites.

8. Educational opportunities would be further diminished or lost.



## New Funding Targets . . . Annual

The department presented the committee with four funding scenarios:

**Funds available . . .** from present ongoing and reliable sources which, if not augmented, would result in a continued degradation of the Park System as described above;

**Park protection . . .** the funding level which would avoid system regression. Includes resources protection, visitor safety, infrastructure, fee system enhancement, and response to increased public demand.

**Park improvement . . .** the funding level which would begin to restore the Park System over the next ten years;

**Accelerated park improvement . . .** the funding level which would establish a quality park system over the next five years. Includes a modest amount for inholding acquisitions and expansion of a few destination parks to accommodate increased tourism use.

	funds available	park protection	park improvement	accelerated park improvement
equipment	\$	\$ 168,000	\$ 240,000	\$ 313,000
capital		2,000,000	3,000,000	4,000,000
operations	2,324,775	3,050,000	3,550,000	4,300,000
TOTALS	\$2,324,775	\$ 5,218,000	\$ 6,790,000	\$ 8,613,000
NEW FUNDS NEEDED		\$ 2,918,000	\$ 4,490,000	\$ 6,313,000
FTEs	96.23	108.78	117.35	126.47
NEW FTEs NEEDED		12.55	21.12	30.24

**\*\*Note:** The present Park System budget is \$3,434,775. It includes \$2,324,775 operations; \$1,100,000 capital; and \$10,000 equipment. Funds will be available from coal tax, motor boat fuel tax, and parks earned revenue to support only current operations at \$2.3 million. Capital and equipment needs would have to come entirely from new revenue. Existing funding comes largely from one-time sources that will not be, or cannot be counted upon, to be available.



## **OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS . . . THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

The present administration has inherited a serious problem of long standing.

The committee recognizes that much, but not all, of what it recommends can only be achieved with additional funding and personnel.

### **ROLE**

The committee sees the need to bridge the gap between the broad mandate in the enabling legislation and the selection, classification, and management of specific parks.

1) The committee recommends that its "Vision" statement be adopted as a draft definition of the Role of the Montana State Park System. In its development the committee considered the department's legal mandates, the public's wishes, and drew upon examples from the nation's quality park systems.

2) It should be offered for public comment along with the department's Classification System, revised if necessary, and then formally adopted and faithfully followed.

### **LONG-RANGE PLANNING**

The State Park Futures Committee considers the restoration of public trust and involvement of paramount and immediate concern.

The public demands concrete results and an ongoing dialogue through public meetings where people can be apprised of progress and can influence department action.

It should not take too long for the department to have already prepared draft documents ready for public review. Taking this step soon would demonstrate to the public that the department is serious about involving citizens and would keep going the momentum started by the State Park Futures Committee's public meetings.

The committee learned of a number of planning efforts started but not completed or shared with the public. It also identified other planning needs which are not being addressed. In making its recommendations it recognizes the funding and staffing limitations. It is encouraged by the department's initiatives to fill vacant planning staff positions.

1) The committee considers the completion of draft park classification documents, the State Park System Plan, and park system priorities vital to public and agency needs. It urges that this planning be given precedence, completed and shared with concerned citizens, revised if necessary, and implemented.

2) Then, site specific management plans should be developed on a priority basis after the proper mission of each park has been determined through classification and the overall State Park System Plan.

Site specific planning should be done in the context of the park system as a whole. Each park should address a specific part, or parts, of the system's mission and should complement, not duplicate without reason, other parks in the system. Each park should adopt the standards and the identity of the system. It should include a comprehensive inventory of the park's natural and cultural features so that they can be properly understood, protected, and developed for their educational value.

Management planning should include provisions for upgrading the quality of resource and visitor protection, public facilities and services, and interpretive/educational information.

Adequate access for all, including people with disabilities, should be given special attention.

3) A minimum, predetermined, system-wide quality standard must be established to encompass all state parks. The department's draft priority system must be completed to insure orderly use of this standard.



4) A healthy State Park System requires input from an informed public. Full participation of concerned citizens on a statewide basis must be encouraged at all stages of park planning, from system-wide to site specific.

5) The State Park Futures Committee strongly recommends against hasty disposal of any individual park lands before the completion of long-range planning. This includes inventory, classification, and prioritization as well as intra and interagency coordination.

Public input suggests that less viable sites may be used as trading stock to further upgrade the quality of the overall State Park System. The public would accept mothballing of some sites if necessary to maintain the status quo until an adequate review is completed.

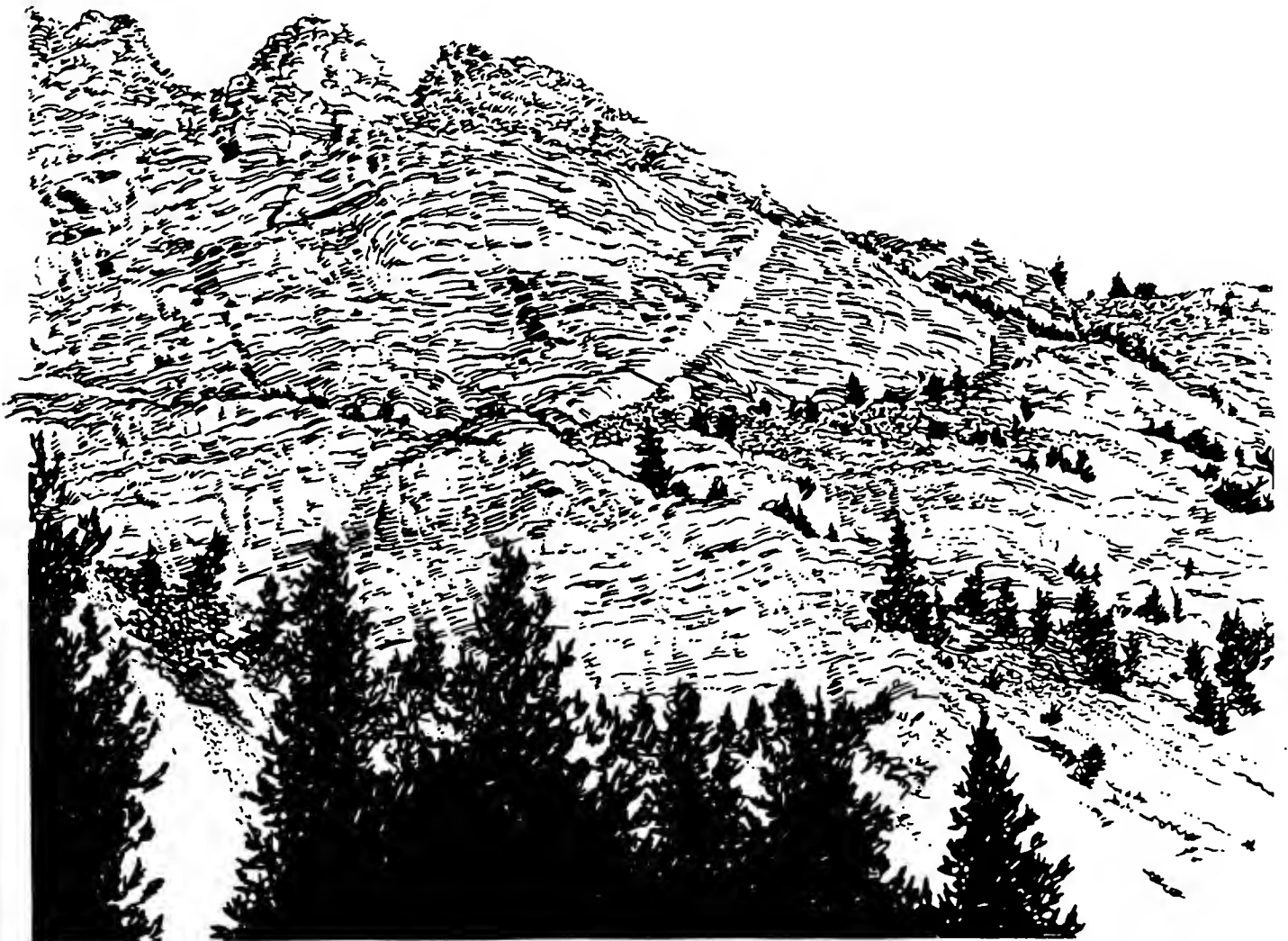
Any trades or disposal must respect the highest and best public benefit and must be based on a comprehensive plan. Any disposal of state owned sites should be to the

maximum advantage of the state in terms of management efficiency and public benefit.

6) *All* of Montana's natural, cultural, and recreational resources should be comprehensively inventoried, beginning with, but not limited to, state owned properties but not limited to state ownership. Montana's legislative mandate suggests exactly that. The state park professionals should be vested with the leadership role in providing that inventory.

Any future cooperative sharing of resource management by city, county, federal, or private entities demands adequate statewide resource data that is developed by the Administration through the department.

The committee feels strongly about developing a broad spectrum of partnerships and has developed more specific recommendations on this subject in a later chapter bearing that title.



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## MANAGEMENT

Several organizational options were considered by the committee... an independent Parks Agency, combining parks with tourism/commerce and the Historical Society, combining parks with State Lands, or returning parks to the Department of Highways.

The committee feels that the State Park System belongs in the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The missions are compatible and complimentary. There are examples of similar organizational structures at the federal level in the Department of Interior which includes the National Park Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and in other states, notably South Dakota, which has a quality State Park System under circumstances similar in many ways to ours.

We recognize that distinct and adequate sources of funding for parks which are recognized and understood as such by the public are fundamental to the healthy marriage of parks to the department.

But the committee strongly recommends that management problems which it has identified be addressed and resolved so this arrangement can more effectively serve the public and the needs of park resources.



Steps which we recommend be taken include:

**1) The department should strive to make Parks an equal partner with its Fish and Wildlife elements.** The director's preference is to merge Parks tightly with Fish and Wildlife so the department is perceived by the public and its employees as one cohesive unit, and that it in fact functions as such.

An alternative is to make the Parks Division a more independent, self-sufficient unit within the department as is the case in South Dakota and the National Park Service. **Given the historical problems with the present organizational structure the committee prefers this alternative.**

**2) The committee applauds the initiative of the chairman of the Fish and Game Commission to change the commission's name to "Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission."** The committee also urges that when members are appointed by the governor there be commensurate representation on the commission of persons whose qualifications and interests are in the field of parks.

**3) The department should be sensitive to the fundamental differences between the management of renewable fish and wildlife and nonrenewable parks resources.** Parks, unlike wildlife, cannot be effectively managed remotely. On-site presence is needed. Addressing threatened parks resources should not be subordinated to other department needs by diverting parks crews.

**4) Parks program policy development should be given a high priority now that planning staff positions have been filled.**

**5) There should be more clearly defined accountability in the chain of command and more formal follow-up to insure the accomplishment of assigned priorities.**

**6) The legitimate and unique needs of professional parks stewardship, such as enforcement and interpretive services, must be recognized and addressed.**

**7) Parks professionals should be afforded the cross-training and professional development opportunities to qualify them for professional advancement throughout the department.**

8) Because of parks' broad mandate to manage Montana's outdoor recreation, natural, historical, and cultural resources, the Parks Division should spearhead interpretive programs for the state and have the visible endorsement of the Governor's Administration and the educational community.

9) The committee feels strongly that parks should be used to capitalize on the educational aspects of Montana's rich heritage, especially for our elementary and secondary school students. This will require new partnerships but also adequate and professionally qualified staff in the Parks Division to do this important, but now neglected, work.

10) The department should increase and expand the interaction between parks and other entities, such as the tourism industry, the educational, and social services communities. This would broaden the expertise to include specialists in the fields of travel promotion, interpretation, and human services, for example, and bring the Park System into contact with additional users who could benefit from parks resources and services.

11) In recognition of public demand, the department should have more routine and frequent public contact about parks matters. People need frequent progress reports about program implementation and face to face opportunities to express their views to the department about broad policy issues, priorities and department initiatives.

12) It is particularly important that the Montana users and taxpayers be kept informed about the budgetary status of parks . . . its revenue sources and amounts, how they are used and the restrictions that apply, as well as budgetary needs. Montanans must also be kept informed about what their money is buying in resource protection, facilities, and services.



## IMAGE AND MARKETING

A number of the system's problems can be solved with appropriate and early attention to its image and marketing. The committee recommends the following actions:

### Appearance

1) The department should recognize the importance of portraying a professional staff image to the public. The uniform of park employees should be upgraded to a standard comparable to other professionally managed state and national parks.

It is not necessary for parks employees have a uniform that is totally unique. It is important that the public be able to distinguish park employees from biologists or game wardens through an identifying patch. It is also vital that the uniform present a professional image of which both the employees and the public which they serve can be proud.

2) Park employees, who are quality and dedicated people, should be properly trained and well-equipped to meet and serve the public.

3) At larger parks, additional specialized personnel are needed. Interpretive, resource, enforcement, and supervisory responsibilities cannot effectively be handled by one or two people. The professional managers should be free to oversee the stewardship of these parks and provide a liaison with partners, their communities, and other professionals.

4) Park construction and maintenance standards should be developed and implemented uniformly statewide. The committee is aware that such standards are being developed for major facilities and urges that the completion and adoption of those standards be expedited.

### Promotion

1) The department should give priority consideration to providing at least one interpretive information specialist at the Helena headquarters office when staffing is increased.

2) Priority should be given to developing and implementing a Governor's administration-wide park marketing campaign involving all pertinent groups and constituencies.

3) The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks should develop a strategic plan for the creation of a philanthropic foundation for state parks whose mission would be to support, promote, and raise private money.

### Identity

1) The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks should establish a clear identity for the parks logo on all signs, publications, and uniforms. This can be done as a supplement to the department's logo where appropriate and not as a replacement for it.

2) Signage should be uniform and identifiable statewide.

3) Promotional campaigns should focus on the system as well as individual parks to reinforce the system's identity.

4) Interaction among Montana state park professionals with peers and other disciplines both within and outside of Montana should be encouraged.



## FUNDING

**The committee recommends funding at the ACCELERATED PARK IMPROVEMENT level of funding on a FIVE year schedule, \$6,313,000 new funds per year, and 30.24 new FTEs (full-time equivalent employees which would consist of both year around and seasonal employees).**

At the request of the committee the department developed various funding scenarios and schedules for committee consideration. After the committee selected its preferred option, the department developed very detailed documentation for the actual projects and activities which our recommendation covers. This information is contained in the Appendix. It is summarized below.

It should be noted that "ACCELERATED PARK IMPROVEMENT" does not include everything that could be done, but is reflective of a quality, but reasonable, budget in view of Montana's overall fiscal realities.

### Funding priorities

This level of funding and manpower will establish a quality, but still very basic, park system over the next five years addressing the following priority needs:

**1) resource protection and human safety . . .**

save irreplaceable natural and cultural features such as Medicine Rocks sandstone formations and Ulm Pishkun artifacts, and provide safer roads and water systems, etc.;

**2) infrastructure integrity . . .**

do preventative maintenance on many buildings and utilities and fund life cycle replacement;

**3) public demand, use, and preference . . .**

add facilities and services to improve customer satisfaction, such as security, information and interpretive services;

**4) revenue enhancement . . .**

provide quality campgrounds and other things people will pay to use and enjoy;

**5) inholdings . . .**

secure properties which if inappropriately used by others could compromise or even destroy existing park values;

**6) meeting long-term future needs . . .**

provide for orderly development of existing undeveloped parks and to acquire through exchange, lease, donation, easement, or fee other park lands worthy of being in the State Park System with an emphasis on expanding existing sites.

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## **Funding needs (itemized list in Appendix)**

### **operations . . . \$2,000,000 new funds**

Includes personnel, supplies, travel, communications, day to day management, routine upkeep, and repairs.

Additional funds would: upgrade professional park management and maintenance capabilities; provide scheduled maintenance and replacement of facilities; increase fee collections, security, public contact, informational/interpretive services; provide long-range management plans; pursue partnerships and adopt a park strategies; liaison with tourism industry; engineering support for capital program and facility maintenance; support for the Montana Conservation Corps; and other operational and maintenance needs;

### **equipment . . . \$313,000 new funds**

Includes all office, shop, and field equipment costing over \$200 and which has a useable life of more than one year.

Additional funds would provide: scheduled replacement of mowers, tractors, trucks, shop equipment, etc; upgrade field safety communications equipment; add new maintenance and service equipment for work crews, fee collectors, and office support;

### **capital . . . \$4,000,000 new funds**

Includes buildings and other facilities such as utilities and roads which are real property improvements and include land acquisitions.

Additional funds would provide: life cycle and preventative maintenance for roads and public facilities; upgrade facilities for handicapped accessibility; add campground services such as dump stations, toilets, shelters, water systems, boat facilities, shade tree irrigation, site control and identification, and facilities for volunteer hosts; provide structure stabilization of historic buildings, erosion control; expand signing and interpretive and public contact facilities; acquisition or easement of critical inholdings and adjoining properties which threaten parks; and expansion for increased public demands for campgrounds, etc.

## **The committee's reasons for its recommendation**

It is vital to not only stop the degradation of our parks but to do it as quickly as possible. This will rescue priceless

resources from certain obliteration and will do it at less cost today than later. Further degradation and inflation only add to the price. The price will be higher and there will be less to save.

Funding at this level will be a sound investment in Montana's tourism industry. It will have very positive economic benefits to local communities and main street businesses throughout the state. The five year schedule will make it possible to synchronize the improvements in the Park System with the state tourism initiative. Reducing the funding and stretching the program out to ten years is too long to wait to develop the partnerships which park improvements will stimulate.

The five year plan will also add and improve facilities more quickly, which will increase the public's user satisfaction and willingness to pay to use, thus augmenting the earning potential of park fees.

Funding at the recommended "ACCELERATED PARK IMPROVEMENT" level will provide Montanans with the substantial visible improvements which they have told the committee they want to see in their parks to increase their quality of life. Piecemealing or phasing makes results less apparent and adds to the frustration of people who have been complaining about the present situation for years already.

## **New Funding Sources**

The committee is aware that finding additional funding for parks will be a difficult matter for the Governor and the Legislature. It felt that it would be best to suggest a broad spectrum of options which it considers the most appropriate of the many it considered. The committee further suggests that a healthy park system draws upon a rational mix of appropriate funding sources rather than relying on a single source of funding.

The committee agreed to include options which the majority favored even though one or more members did not. This resulted in a list of 16 revenue categories. Three of these, the General Fund, Coal Tax and User Fees are unanimous committee recommendations. The list does not include many other revenue sources which a majority of the committee did not favor for a variety of reasons.

From this list, or other sources it may prefer, Montana's political leadership may select those that it considers viable and adequate.

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The committee also strongly recommends that rigid earmarking of funds be avoided, particularly where it might unnecessarily limit or encumber the flexibility and prerogatives necessary for responsive management.

In developing its recommendations the committee first defined the criteria by which it would judge all of the possibilities which were suggested by the public or surfaced in literature review and its own deliberations.

#### **Prioritized Criteria for Evaluating Funding Options:**

1. Preferred new funding sources should not create obligations or earmarking which diverts the department from, or is in conflict with, the park mission.

2. Recommended new funding sources should not carry accounting responsibilities and complexities which are beyond the management scope and capacity of department, but should contribute to a planned and balanced parks program.

3. The recommended funding options should have broad constituency support.

4. Funding sources which can be expected to provide long-term benefits, are stable and predictable, are preferred.

5. Funding sources which are the least costly and simplest to manage and which provide a revenue source large enough to assure a high "benefits to the public" vs. "cost to administer" ratio are preferred.

6. Funding sources which can be shown to have a logical tie to the purpose for which they will be spent are preferred.

7. Activity-related user fees should provide benefits to those who paid the fees.

8. Funding which permits or instills an expression of pride and confidence in the Park System and which can be used to enhance the aesthetic value of the system is preferred.

9. Given the demands on traditional funding sources, the committee will also give priority consideration to new, innovative, and creative funding options.

10. Because the public recognizes that there are urgent needs in parks and is rightly impatient to have them addressed, funding sources which will provide immediate budget relief to provide quick and visible improvements are also needed.

#### **Recommended Funding Sources:**

These are discussed in detail in the "Revenue Estimates and Discussion of Recommended Options" section which follows. Some sources include important qualifiers which are identified in the discussion.

\* Unanimous committee recommendations

##### **Rental Car Fees**

**\*General Fund, restore**

**\*Coal Tax, increase parks share**

Statewide Mil Levy

New \$.01 Gas Tax

Big Sky Dividend

Sales Tax

Recreational Equipment Tax

**\*User Fees**

Restaurant Tax

RV Sticker

Nonresident Boat Fees

Existing Park Roads Maintenance

Law Amendment

Motor Vehicle Taxes

Small Boat Fees

Federal Matching Funds

The committee also considered and rejected:

- Liquor taxes
- Gambling taxes
- Tobacco taxes
- Bed taxes
- Corridor sales taxes—assessed only in the major travel area between Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks
- Land conversion taxes—assessments made when undeveloped land is developed for any nonagricultural purpose
- Land transfer taxes—assessed any time title to real property is transferred
- Nonresident landowner taxes—additional assessments on owners of property in Montana but whose primary residence is outside of Montana
- Fishing and hunting license fees—adding new fees earmarked for parks or allocating a portion of existing fees to parks

The committee felt that these did not meet enough of the criteria to be appropriate of viable sources of parks funding.

## Revenue Estimates and Discussion of the Recommended Options

### Rental Car Fees

Montana has about 15 firms with about 67 outlets in the short-term car rental business. From 80% to almost 100% of their gross annual earnings comes from non-resident rentals. They gross about \$12 million in annual nonresident earnings.

A 4% tax on nonresident business is estimated to earn about \$480,000 annually.

### General Fund

The public at large believes that the State Park System is supported by the state General Fund and wants it to continue. The committee believes that the park system should be funded from a variety of sources and feels unanimously that there are sound reasons to include the state General Fund in that mix.

Park benefits go far beyond those who visit. Montana's quality of life depends upon the preservation of our cultural and natural heritage and the basic tax system should support it. State parks are a legitimate part of Montana's social and material infrastructure. The system is worthy of general taxation support by virtue of the same rationale as are schools and libraries.

Montana is the only state except for Florida and Missouri which does not use its General Fund in support of state parks. Florida and Missouri directly earmark a portion of their general sales tax to parks, instead.

The committee suggests the following formulae as options for returning General Fund support to state parks:

1) Match user fees on a fixed ratio. For example, at 1:1 the General Fund share would be about \$850,000 to \$950,000 per year in the coming biennium.

User fees could support user services and the General Fund could provide for park resource protection and infrastructure development and maintenance.

The matching formula would provide park managers an additional incentive to optimize fee earnings.

2) Restore the General Fund support to its 1985 level of \$624,000.

3) Use General Funds for bringing the present system up to standard in the capital program. It could be withdrawn when this is accomplished and user fees or other funding sources are available to assure life cycle maintenance of facilities. Of the \$4 million/year proposal, 1/4 to 1/2 could be used for matching federal funds and to address resource protection and rehabilitation.

4) The Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) which can address Montana's needs in the areas of disadvantaged and troubled youth, job training for teens and young adults, as well as address park and conservation projects is worthy of General Fund support for at least its administrative costs.





## Coal tax

Continued use of the coal tax is consistent with the legislature's original intent that **the extraction of one nonrenewable resource, coal, be used to protect and develop another nonrenewable resource, parks.**

1.27% of all mine mouth coal tax collections is deposited in a trust account from which only the interest can be spent for parks purposes.

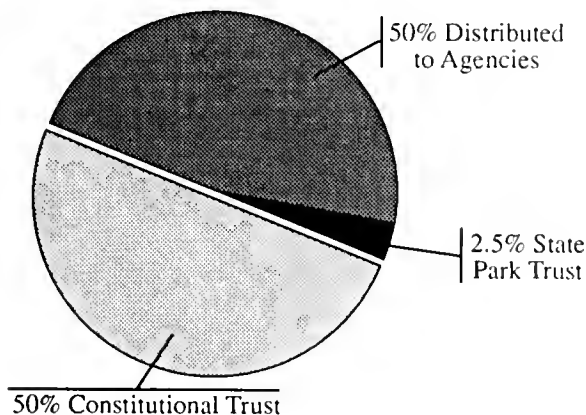
In the year ending June 30, 1990 the total tax collections equaled \$68,501,496. The parks share of this was \$869,969. Due to a reduction in the tax in coming years, the tax proceeds will drop to about \$40,000,000 per year with the parks share falling to about \$508,000. This will mean that the trust will grow more slowly than in the past.

Account status June 30, 1990:

Corpus balance (parks 2/3) \$12,112,778  
Tax deposits, previous 12 mos. \$869,969  
Interest, available to parks \$1,228,170

The history of the parks coal tax trust is one of erosion. It began at 2.5% but was reduced to 1.27% with a splitting off of 1/3 of the account to the Arts Council for cultural projects. The parks share became smaller again when 12% was allocated to the Department of Highways until 1993. It has also suffered the ravages of falling interest earnings, a temporary capping, and the scheduled reduction of the tax rate from 30% to 15% which is now being phased in.

## ORIGINAL ALLOCATION

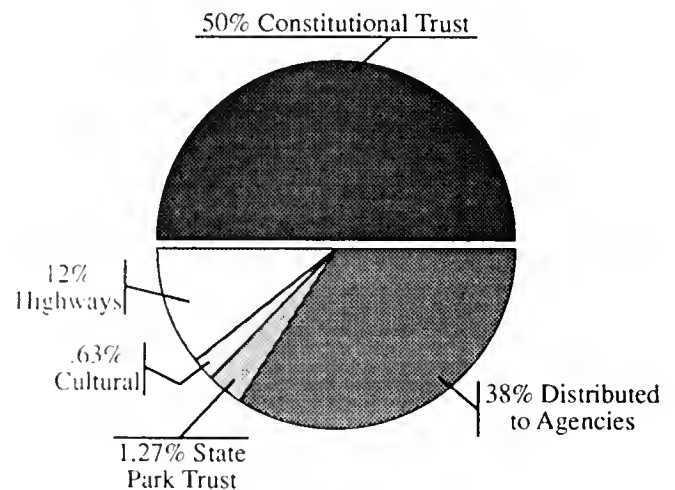


The committee strongly supports both the concept of using severance taxes to support parks and increasing the funding from this source. It also agrees with the use of Coal Tax for arts and cultural projects and does not want the funding formula for these purposes diminished in any way. It unanimously suggests the following options for accomplishing this:

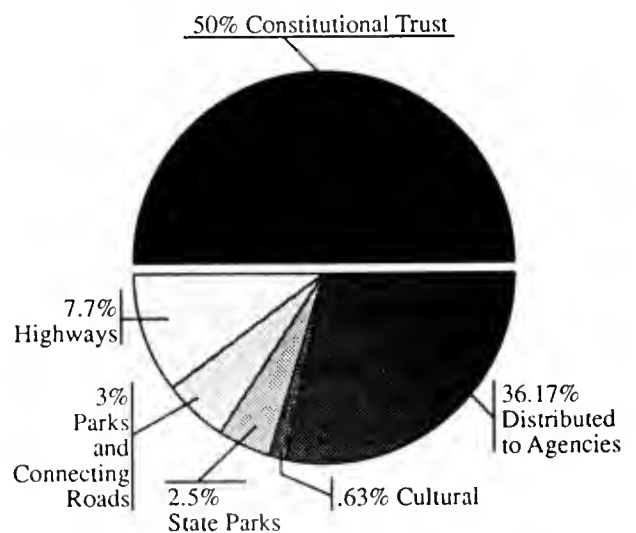
1) From the 12% now going to highways, direct that 3% be used for park connecting and interior roads, and from the same temporary highway account take an additional 1.23% to restore the parks Coal Tax Trust to the original 2.5%.

**Present tax share @ 1.27% \$869,969 annually**  
**New tax share @ 2.5% \$1,712,537 annually**  
**Added interest first full year @ 10% \$84,000 new interest available for appropriation annually**

## EXISTING ALLOCATION



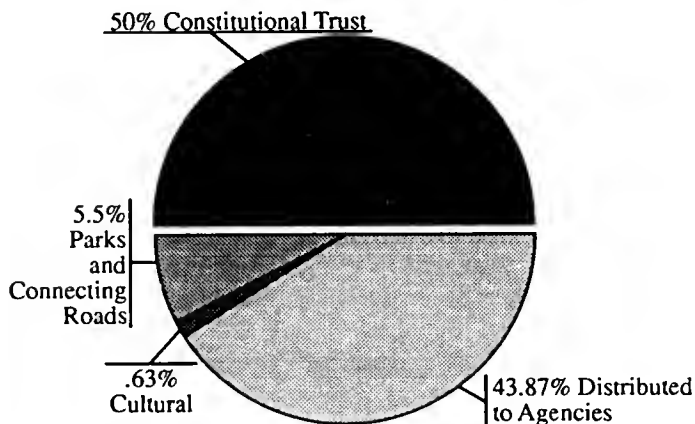
## PROPOSED FOR 1991





2) When the temporary 12% allocation now going for highway rebuilding sunsets in 1993, earmark at least 3% for park purposes including the authority to use it in partnership with counties and others for park connecting roads. This would bring the total allocated for parks and park roads to 5.5% of the coal tax.

## PROPOSED FOR 1993



Present tax share @ 1.27% \$869,969 annually  
 New tax share @ 5.5% \$3,767,582 annually  
 Added interest first full year @ 10% \$290,000  
 new interest available for appropriation annually

3) In the absence of any increase, the committee strongly urges that the parks Coal Tax Trust be protected from any further erosion. The committee wants to go on record as supporting the share now going to the Arts Council for cultural projects.

## Statewide Mil Levy

This would be another source of general taxation support. It might be preferred to allocating funds from the existing General Fund sources.

The 1988 earnings from the 161 mils was \$11,640,744.  
 On a statewide average one mil was worth \$72,300.

( The 1988 assessments were: University system, 6 mils; Agriculture and Livestock, 75 mils; and all others, 80 mils.)

## New \$.01 Gas Tax

The state gasoline tax is 20 cents per gallon. In the year ending June 30, 1990, this totaled \$87,832,742 less \$3,857,698 in refunds, or \$83,975,044.

The committee recommends adding a one cent tax which would generate about \$4.2 million per year.

This new revenue should be used for upgrading roads leading from the interstate and primary highways to state parks and for constructing, improving, and maintaining interior park roads.

Safe and reliable roads leading to and within parks is an essential need of park users. Paved highways are needed for high-use parks, particularly those serving nonresident travelers. People will not venture onto unpaved connecting roads with expensive equipment. Tourists cannot be expected to find their way to parks on roads that are not well marked.

The Park System is not funded to maintain its existing interior road system to a gravel standard much less pave roads or assume the responsibility for connecting roads leading from the interstate and primary highways.

Counties cannot afford to make these roads a priority unless there is sufficient resident use to justify it, which is most often not the case. This increase would provide relief for counties which are unfairly burdened in these instances.

Tourism is the major growth industry in Montana. Good roads are a vital part of making Montana's attractions available to our visitors thus encouraging them to stay longer in our state.

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## **Big Sky Dividend**

Governor Stephens has proposed capping the constitutional trust and using the tax proceeds, instead, through local governments for immediate infrastructure repairs throughout the state. The program is expected to generate about \$20 million per year.

The committee recommends that IF the legislature adopts the Big Sky Dividend program, it and the Governor add the State Park System to it as a top priority. State parks have infrastructure needs throughout the state. A healthy State Park System would improve our citizens' quality of life, preserve our priceless legacy for coming generations, and contribute substantially more to the state's and local community's economies.

The public considers state parks as part of the social infrastructure and as important as roads and bridges.

## **Sales Tax**

The committee recommends that IF a sales tax is enacted, a portion should be earmarked for state parks, or appropriations be made to parks from an augmented general fund.

The committee believes that this is an appropriate use of this potential new revenue source for reasons already cited in the previous general fund and statewide mil levy discussions.

## **Recreational Equipment Tax**

The committee recommends that outdoor recreational equipment such as camping gear, footwear and clothing, film and developing, nonmotorized boats, rafts and personal recreational floating equipment, trail bikes and three wheelers, snow skis, accessories and clothing, water skis and accessories, jet skis, hang gliders, and others which a more complete study might identify, be assessed a 4% tax at time of sale with the proceeds earmarked for state parks.

The committee recommends excluding equipment already subject to a similar tax, such as fishing equipment, firearms, and ammunition.

The Institute for Tourism and Recreational Research has rough preliminary survey information which indicates that nonresidents spend about \$73 million annually in Montana, and residents spent \$68 million, a total of about

\$141 million on these items.

A 4% tax at time of retail sale would yield about \$5.6 million annually.

The committee understands that more study would be needed to more specifically define what equipment should actually be subject to the tax and how much revenue it would generate. Preliminary analysis suggests, however, that people who own such equipment benefit from state parks and are not now supporting their recreation in the way hunters and fishers have supported their recreation very successfully for decades.

## **User Fees**

1) The committee unanimously recommends that all users pay an equitable fee. It found the present level of fees is about right considering the existing level of facilities and services and in comparison with similar parks in neighboring states.

2) To assure fairness to users and to optimize collection of fees under the existing system, the department reports that it will take an additional \$90,000 and 3.5 FTEs, or 7 seasonal positions.

It is estimated that this will generate an additional \$200,000 per year through better fee compliance (currently spend \$72,000 to collect \$300,000).

The committee recommends that this be done and has covered this need in its funding recommendations.

3) The committee further recommends that the annual camping pass be reinstated, at an appropriate market price, for the convenience of campers.

4) Passes or discounts which are provided in parks, particularly those mandated by the legislature, should be rebated to parks by the General Fund or other appropriate account. **It is our recommendation that social welfare programs, not parks, provide any subsidy for the truly needy.**

5) The committee feels that the existing Golden Years Passes (for resident Montanans 62 years and older) should be honored but no new ones should be issued. It recommends that the department consider this as it decides whether to appeal the recent district court summary judgement which requires that existing passes be honored.

6) The committee urges the department to complete its land classification review and make the appropriate adjustments between parks and fishing access to remove confusion about fees.

There is confusion in the public about the difference between fishing access where fees are not charged and park system sites where fees are charged. Indeed, in many cases there is no difference in the facilities and services provided. Some fishing accesses, like parks appear to serve multiple users, not just fishermen, and seem to suffer from similar problems of lack of appropriate facilities and adequate maintenance. Because of the public's change of their use, some fishing access sites ought to be part of the State Park System and users should be charged appropriately for facilities and service.

### **Restaurant Tax**

Eating places in Montana grossed \$378,586,000 according to the 1987 Census of Retail Trade. A 4% tax earmarked for parks would yield over \$15 million annually.

While data cannot distinguish between restaurant customers associated with recreation and business, another survey done by the Institute for Recreation and Tourism Research seems to show that almost half is attributable to nonresidents in Montana.

### **RV Sticker**

The Montana Good Sam Club estimates that there are 35,000 recreational vehicles owned by resident Montanans. A fee of \$3.50 would earn about \$122,500.

Recreational vehicle users represent a substantial proportion of park customers. They also require special services not needed by picnickers or tent campers, for example.

The committee recommends the creation of a \$3.50 Annual Recreation Vehicle sticker which would be required for all RVs not now specially assessed a similar fee (such motor homes, travel trailers, 5th wheels, pick-up campers, and tent trailers) and earmark the revenue for state parks for RV services and facilities.

### **Nonresident Boat Fees**

The committee recommends extending the present resident boat registration laws to certain nonresident boaters who use Montana waters.

Montana honors a nationwide reciprocity law which allows boats from other states with a federally approved numbering system to use Montana waters for up to 90 days without a Montana registration number. Counties "may" sell use sticker to other non resident boaters but none do because it is not cost-effective.

Canadians are not subject to reciprocity or to registration and are using Montana waters in ever greater numbers, particularly in the Flathead, without cost.

Neither the Department of Revenue nor the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks have records from which to make revenue estimates. In October 1990, too late for inclusion in this report, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research expects to have survey results which will be useful in estimating boat numbers.



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## **Existing Park Roads Maintenance Law Amendment**

*Note: This recommendation will not generate additional funding but its implementation will free for other purposes park funds now going to road maintenance.*

There exists permissive, but not mandatory, authority for the Department of Highways to provide certain connecting roads to state parks.

*23-1-104. Connecting roads. The department of highways MAY (emphasis added) construct, improve, and maintain, with state highway funds, connecting roads between existing state highways and state parks. Each road shall not exceed a total of ten miles.*

The committee recommends that this law be amended to include interior park roads as well as connecting roads and to make this a mandatory responsibility of the Department of Highways using highway gas taxes. Provisions should be made for assisting counties with roads which provide access to heavily used parks. This would be a very cost-effective partnership arrangement.

## **Motor Vehicle Taxes**

There are 1,098,000 motor vehicles registered in Montana. A \$0.50 fee on all registrations would generate over \$500,000 annually.

Since most state park users arrive by vehicle, and because a substantial amount of the facility and maintenance costs are associated with vehicles, this would be an appropriate way to fund parks.

## **Small Boat Fees**

The committee recommends that registration fees be created for canoes, rafts and draft boats under 12 feet long, for crafts owned by both residents and nonresidents.

Neither the Department of Revenue nor the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks have records from which to make revenue estimates. In October 1990, too late for inclusion in this report, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research expects to have survey results which will be useful in estimating boat numbers.

## **Federal Matching Funds**

The committee urges the department to capitalize on all available sources of federal funds. It is aware of the following sources:

**Land and Water Conservation Fund  
Dingle Johnson Fisheries and Boating Funds  
Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers  
PL 89 72 Funds  
Federal Highway Administration Lake Access Funds**

The committee is also aware that these funds all require state matching of up to 50%. Its intent is that any new funding made available to parks be appropriately split to optimize the use of federal funds.





## PARTNERSHIPS

Initial committee discussions recognized the tremendous potential of partnership strategies. Each committee member could reference, or was personally involved in, one or more success stories with parks relevance.

Effective partnerships provide a mechanism for maximizing limited resources of individual agencies or entities and for improving the quality of the end product resulting in a net benefit to the public.

The following realities create the need for pursuing partnership strategies at the highest level among public land managers: interlocking land control patterns; overlapping legal authorities; need for pooling limited special skills; complimenting missions and charters; all for a common customer—the taxpayer. Partnerships not only offer the best opportunity to maximize effectiveness but also demonstrate to today's more sophisticated and knowledgeable public that their public servants are up to the challenge of working for the common good and pooling of resources.

The public is most bothered by waste of resources and money and by needless duplication of effort. The public is cynical about the government's ability to make effective use of scarce taxpayers' dollars. Partnerships attack the problem on both fronts in highly visible ways.

We can no longer afford the traditional ways of doing business where each entity jealously guards its own turf. All agencies of government today are short of funds and manpower. To squander limited resources on separate discrete and inadequate efforts is unacceptable.

The committee sees opportunity for expanding the use of partnerships in two broad areas: 1) within the Governor's administration, such as between tourism and parks, and; 2) outside of state government, such as with the federal and local agencies and the private sector, where the Governor and his administrative leadership is needed.

**The committee recommends the following actions:**

### **State Administration Level**

1) Montana must have an overall master strategy for managing all of its natural, cultural, and recreational resources. It should be developed under the leadership of the Governor and involve the directors of all of Montana's public land managing agencies.

Interagency cooperation and other partnership possibilities maximize the public benefits of a unified approach to outdoor recreational resource management in Montana.

By having a master strategy it is possible to mobilize support for the implementation of individual initiatives, particularly budget requests.

This is particularly important given the Governor's stated priority and initiative to improve the state's economy through enhancement of its tourism potential.

2) We respectfully, but strongly urge, that the Governor make the State Park System a top priority in his administration and begin a tradition which will be carried forward into future administrations because the demonstrated value in doing so will have been proven.

3) We recommend that the Governor convene his cabinet officers and other state officials to identify new state level partnerships to increase the utilization of parks for the social and economic well-being of Montanans.

**Obvious participants include:**

- a) **the Department of Commerce**  
for promotional and private sector tourism ties;
- b) **the Department of Highways**  
for improved signage, maps, and park roads;
- c) **The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Department of State Lands**  
to assure that appropriate resources under their administration are effectively linked with parks;
- d) **The Historical Society**  
to share with Fish, Wildlife and Parks expertise in the preservation, management, interpretation, and promotion of historic sites;
- e) **The Office of Public Instruction**  
to use unique parks qualities to the best teaching advantage;
- f) **The Department of Family Services, The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Institutions**  
to use our park and human resources more effectively in symbiotic relationships through the Montana Conservation Corps.

4) Following the development of the Administration's strategy, we suggest that the Governor convene a Partnership Forum to develop and share future cooperative efforts drawing from all sectors of Montana society to the benefit of all taxpayers.

These partnerships should involve appropriate agencies of the executive branch and include local and federal agencies, the legislature, individual private citizens, not for profit organizations, and other private groups.

Only at the Governor's level can a "center of gravity" or "focal point" be established to marshal, coalesce, and make more effective the current individual efforts.

5) The committee supports the Governor's Natural Resource Council which meets regularly to discuss common land management concerns. It consists of the Governor, the Regional Director of the US Forest Service and the BLM State Director. We recommend expanding the membership and scope of that forum.

We suggest adding the Superintendent of Glacier or Yellowstone national parks, possibly on a permanent revolving basis. Consideration should also be given to adding other federal land managing agencies such as the US Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service on an "as needed," issue by issue basis.

This group, through the Governor's leadership, could be very effective in developing high-level statewide priorities, and carrying out comprehensive state/federal initiatives in recreational management, travel promotion and public information, for example, as well as continuing to address the traditional land management issues considered by the council.

6) To marshal the information of diverse agencies to further take advantage of the potential symbiosis, the present Geographical Information System should be augmented to include park resources data throughout the state.



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## Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Level

The committee was impressed and frequently surprised by the number and scope of partnership arrangements being employed throughout the State Park System. These came to our attention through discussions with staff, during park visits, and public meetings. It was apparent that individual staff initiative and innovation, or outside interest, was most often responsible for these successes. These efforts appeared to be unique and not often shared with others. We found no department policies (except at the Great Falls Headquarters) which mandated, prescribed, encouraged, or budgeted for their use. Yet, they are being used to considerable advantage.

We also found that the partnership strategy has far more potential.

### The committee recommends that:

7) The department develop incentives to encourage managers to use partnership strategies. This should be done with the participation of field managers to be most effective. Perhaps a portion of field operating budgets could be allocated on a one for one matching of partnership assistance. Awards for outstanding managers and their partners might be announced at an annual Partnership Awards function.

8) Staff be assigned to document and share the prescriptions for successful partnerships throughout the system so that each new manager and potential partner does not have to start from the beginning to learn the necessary laws, rules, procedures, and effective techniques.

9) Staff and budget should also be devoted to outreach to other states, agencies, and the private sector to keep abreast of the partnership phenomenon which is sweeping the country and becoming more sophisticated at an accelerating rate.

10) The department should take the lead in advancing the partnership initiative among a broad spectrum of entities both inside and outside government. The state's best experts in this field should be, and are, in the department. Unfortunately, presently staff time and funding is not available for such an initiative. The committee urges that it be considered when budget relief is realized.

The committee has developed an extensive list of partnership possibilities which are included in the Appendix. They include suggestions for private individuals, groups, businesses, and industry; and public agencies at the local, state, and federal levels. It has also identified a number of ways these partners could be used to raise money, promote, acquire, develop, and maintain parks.

It is not only the resources of the State Park System which are in jeopardy. Partnerships also have the potential to reach out to all levels of government, historical societies, and others to address the needs of the broader spectrum of cultural and natural resources. This would meet a need pointed out to the committee throughout the state and at the same time relieve the pressure for the State Park System to accept inappropriate management responsibilities because present alternatives are limited.

11) The committee recognizes the long-term value of establishing a private foundation to help support parks. It could raise money and accept bequeaths and endowments; be a park advocate; provide technical assistance; involve prominent, successful persons in park issues; and provide other services which it might choose.

This has been highly successful in virtually every worthy public endeavor including park systems. But, to be successful it must be professionally staffed and be adequately funded from the outset. Even under optimum conditions it would take at least a year to establish. The committee realizes that Montana's low population will make the task more difficult. For this reason it does not consider the establishing of a foundation to be among the early solutions to the parks problem.

It does suggest, however, that the department look for assistance in establishing a foundation. It might research the grants field for help or consider hiring consultant help if appropriate.

12) Volunteers can provide immediate and substantial benefits to parks. In fact, examples of volunteerism already exist throughout the system. However, except for the Great Falls Headquarters, there is no organized and staffed program which includes formal recruitment, job descriptions, training, uniforms, incentives and rewards, and the other amenities necessary to truly capitalize on the great potential of volunteerism.



The committee recommends that the department staff fund and develop a statewide volunteer program. It is the committee's intent that this be included if the department receives funding at either the "Park improvement" or its recommended "Accelerated park improvement" funding levels.

The campground host program now being used in some parks could be increased substantially if parks provided site amenities such as level pads, water, sewer, and electrical services which would make them attractive and feasible for volunteers. Fewer than five parks now offer these basic services. The committee urges the department to consider their installation a high priority in the capital improvements budget which it has recommended.

## "Model" or "Destination" Park Demonstration Projects

13) We recommend consideration of two or more Model Parks projects to demonstrate the value of using partnerships to create true park destinations for both Montanans and tourists.

The committee cautions that the models proposed are chosen because they represent immediate and exceptional existing partnership opportunities. They should be encouraged before these opportunities are lost. They should not be viewed as, or implemented to avoid long-range orderly planning in the park system.

This concept has the potential to marshal the appropriate interests, expertise, and resources to capitalize on the tourism, educational, recreational, and legacy values of the State Park System.

The committee offers four examples of projects which would demonstrate a variety of partnership combinations using existing parks widely different in their present development and which are spread geographically throughout the state.

A common feature of all is their potential to capitalize on tourism, the industry with the major growth potential in Montana.

Agriculture, mining, and timber, while basic and important, have reached plateaus. When we view the high quality of Montana's tourism resources compared to other states and contrast that with the investment in those resources it is obvious that we have been very derelict in not developing and promoting them better. If we are to maximize the economic benefit to the state we must build a network of quality tourist attractions.

*We must get away from the impression that Montana is only a pit stop between Glacier and Yellowstone Parks.*

The committee is particularly strong in its belief in the importance of **partnerships** in improving the quality of our parks.

The following four examples will illustrate the committee's concepts. They demonstrate geographical distribution and diversity, all levels of development, and a variety of park themes. They all have two qualities in





common: they can coalesce a broad spectrum of partnership interests; and they have great tourism potential.

The committee recommends that the department study these and others which it might identify, for their viability. The committee urges that the best of these projects be included in the Governor's proposal to the 1991 Legislature.

**"Chain of Lakes"** Northwestern, new park, no development . . .

4000 acres recently donated by Champion International Corporation on McGregor; Upper, Middle, and Lower Thompson; Loon; Horseshoe.

**Partners:** *Champion International, US Forest Service, Plum Creek* for potential land trades; all publics for planning; private entrepreneurs, service clubs and volunteers, chambers of commerce for development and management;

A **"Flathead Lake"** destination park incorporating West Shore, Big Arm, Elmo, Finley Point, Yellow Bay, Wayfarers Parks. Located in Northwestern Montana, these parks have long been established and developed but are worn out. They are now individually but inadequately managed and promoted . . .

**Partners:** *the Salish/Kootenia Tribe, U of M Biological Station at Yellow Bay, Department of Highways, cities of Polson, Big Fork, and Kalispell, Chambers of Commerce, Historical Societies, Flathead and Lake Counties, Glacier National Park, Glacier Country Tourism Council, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of Commerce, and the US Forest Service;*

Upgrade facilities and management to create a regional tourism magnet through common promotion, shared administrative and maintenance effort, and development of innovative and high quality attractions and accommodations.

**Makoshika.** Eastern, long established but primitive, great potential but little use because of lack of facilities and promotion . . .

**Partners:** *the Custer Country Tourism Council, City of Glendive, Dawson County, Glendive Chamber of Commerce, Historical Societies, Friends of Makoshika, BLM, to name only a few.*

**Canyon Ferry.** West Central, Tremendous immediate potential to increase use, opportunities, and revenue, established but new long-range planning underway . . .

It has the best potential for private investment and an immediate opportunity for significant symbiosis between the federal and state governments and the private sector.

**Partnerships** involving the *Bureau of Reclamation, The Bureau of Land Management, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, US Coast Guard, Lewis and Clark County, the Canyon Ferry Recreation Association, Broadwater County, Helena and Townsend Chambers of Commerce*, concessionaires, and adjacent private businesses, and other recreation and sporting groups.

**Giant Springs.** Central, well-established, well-developed but still evolving and growing, a first-class park with more opportunities immediately at hand . . .

New department headquarters, new fish hatchery, highly developed, high quality park facilities already in place. More undeveloped land acquired through trade and donation, new USFS Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center being designed.

**Strong partnership groups in place:** *Giant Springs Heritage State Park Commission, Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, Montana Power Company, Portage Chapter of Lewis and Clark Trail Foundation, USFS.* Almost 100 dedicated, well organized and managed volunteers.

Within high population area, nationally known, national historic site, and could be a model river front and historic park development.





## THE MONTANA CONSERVATION CORPS

*The introduction to this chapter of the report is taken from a letter written by Chairman Ed Zaidlicz to the Opinion Editor and which appeared on the Editorial Page of the Billings Gazette, July 1, 1990.*

### **"TWO NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES IN JEOPARDY"**

In June the State Park Futures Committee inspected the Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park. Our 16 public meetings and other state park visitations confirmed that Montana had a problem. However, one feature of the Caverns proved noteworthy — it was the enduring quality of the work the Civilian Conservation Corps had done over a half century ago. The craftsmanship and functional value of their legacy had to be applauded.

Montana's last legislature, recognizing these historic achievements, wisely passed a bill creating a Montana Conservation Corps. Our committee was enthused about the work MCC could perform to correct many of the physical problems our state parks now face.

The MCC funding needs for 1990, to get the program started, amounted to \$225,881. Of this \$69,000 had to be raised from new first year entrance fees to our State Parks. The anticipated level of receipts was not realized and MCC was aborted. "For want of a nail a war was lost." In reviewing supporting statistics to justify MCC's creation, I found "that for each public dollar invested we could expect a \$1.25 to \$1.93 return." Our committee can confirm that an enormous backlog of badly needed conservation work exists just to protect Montana's priceless state parks.

The principle goal of MCC was "to provide a work experience program for unemployed or economically disadvantaged youth and adults" — a goal highly laudable and deserving of our early and enthusiastic support. However, in recent years I have been aware of another nonrenewable resource threat that Montanans must address beside state parks, and that is our emotionally disadvantaged youth.

I have witnessed (Billings area) professionals like Diane Barz, Harold Hanser, Ted Lechne, and Richard Kerstein agonize over their lack of options to save many of our disadvantaged youth from being drawn into the vortex of the criminal justice system.

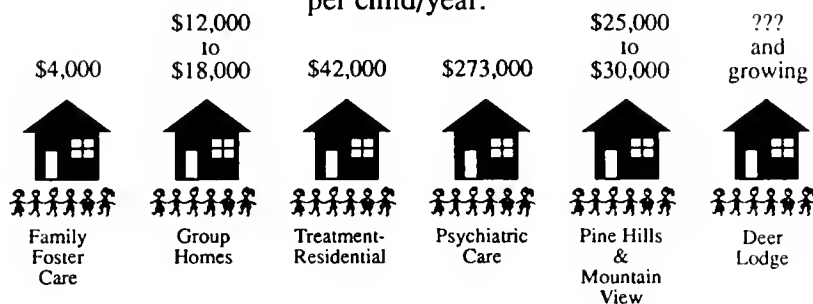
Sadly, our social system requires heavy dollar investment in youth, that have become court statistics, by placing them in costly environments that often fail to return these troubled children to a full productive role in our society. Many of these youth are confused and teetering on the line between achieving their birthright as productive citizens and the abyss that ultimately develops life-long inhabitants of institutions, which further sap our economic strength. We can't build enough institutions to warehouse all these future unfortunates, if current trends prove accurate.

Continued page 49 . . .

Our real hope is in preventive action to help redirect these children before they enter the "Justice continuum." Our educational community and the workers in the Department of Family Services are knowledgeable and aware of many of these young people who can be saved with timely action. The MCC is a cost-effective option that provides work experience to learn useful skills, to enjoy the therapy of productive physical labor in our great outdoors, to develop discipline and self esteem—all without the imprinted stigma of being "institutionalized."

If our social conscience is unwilling to accept this current, burgeoning evidence of impending catastrophe, perhaps hard monetary statistics may better focus on the inadequacies of our efforts.

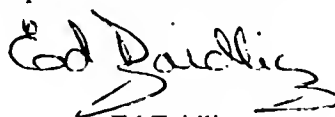
Currently for children 16 to 18 years of age we pay  
per child/year:



In contrast the 1990 MCC program budgeted \$225,881 for 70 corps members (3 adult crews—4 summer youth crews). I know there are at least 375 kids now in Foster Care between the ages of 16 and 18 that could be considered for this alternative chance.

Too many of our scarce tax dollars are now directed toward unsuccessful "after the fact" action. We should shift emphasis to prevention and early lifestyle redirection to achieve long-term benefits and thus relieve our more fortunate children of some of the future tax burden our profligate and ill-advised actions have already levied on them.

Faced with a degeneration of a priceless legacy involving our state parks and our troubled youth, I believe we can ameliorate both problems by early reactivation of our dormant MCC program. The magic formula the 3 C's devised 50 years ago is still valid and most applicable. Must we continue to repeat the expedient but failed practices while we avoid the acceptance of a certain future catastrophe?

  
Ed Zaidlicz

In addition to the benefits mentioned in Chairman Zaidlicz's letter, there are others the committee feels are worthy of mention.

Timely action would provide immediate, obvious and low-cost improvements in our parks. This would keep the momentum of current public interest and provide early demonstration of concrete action.

The improvements which MCC could provide include

the type that would enhance tourism related facilities and fee collections thus returning early monetary benefits.

The committee recommends that the MCC Program be funded and implemented as soon as possible. The funding level recommended by the committee includes it, as mentioned in the "funding" section of these recommendations, the committee sees solid justification for allocating general fund monies to support the administration of the program.



## THE 1990 MONTANA HISTORIC SITES STUDY COMMISSION

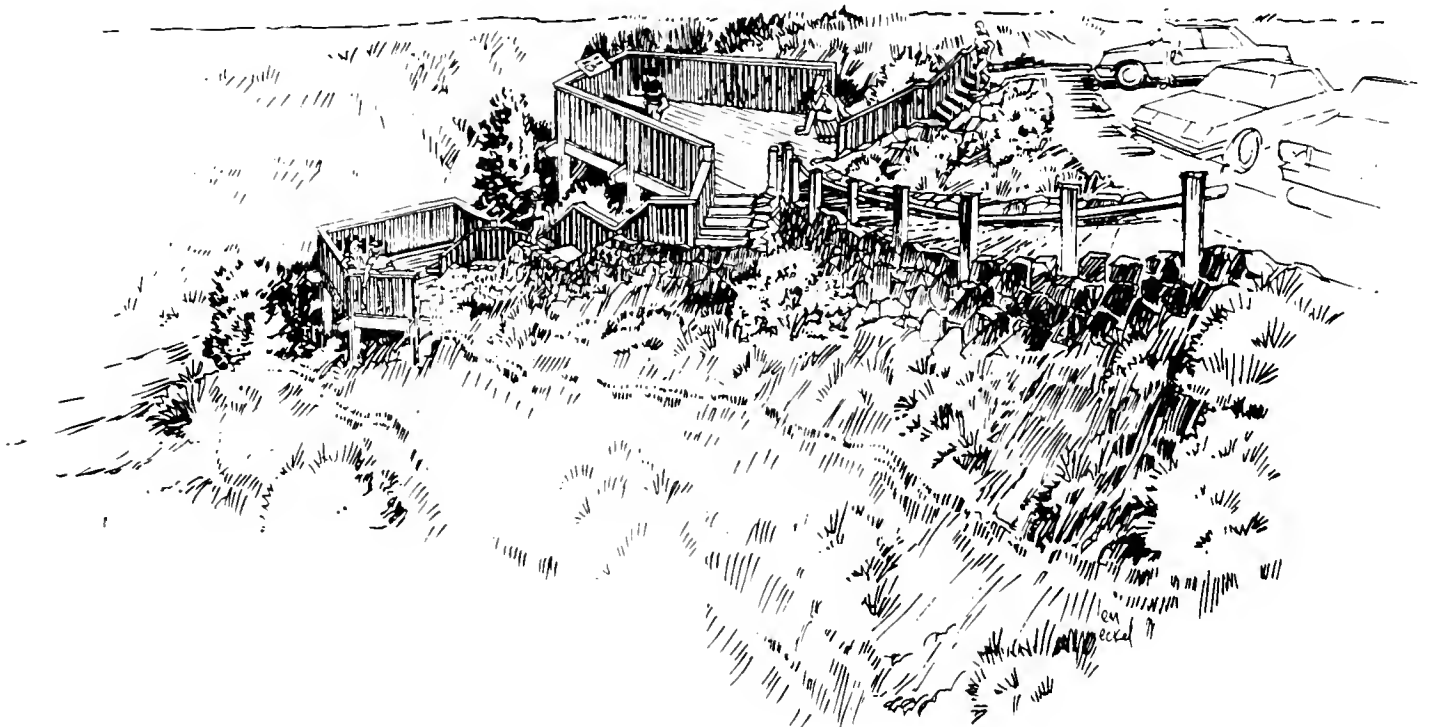
The 1990 Montana Historic Sites Study Commission was created by the Montana Historical Society to make recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, state agencies, and others about the future management of historic and prehistoric sites.

The committee was created after the 1989 Legislative Session which considered special legislation to address a broad range of concerns for the protection and utilization of these irreplaceable resources. The Legislative committees concluded that the Historical Society already had the necessary authority and funding without new legislation and agreed that a study was warranted.

The State Park Futures Committee appreciates the work of the 1990 Montana Historic Sites Study Commission and the Historical Society. Their detailed study of technical matters which are beyond the expertise of our committee gives appropriate special attention to our priceless cultural heritage.

The executive summary of their report will be distributed with a copy of this report. A copy of the complete report will be available from the Historical Society and will be included in the Appendix of this document.

It should be noted that the historic sites study may make recommendations which are beyond the capabilities of the funding recommendations of the State Park Futures Committee. For example, we have provided for only one cultural resources specialist and only modest increases for inventories and stabilization which are in line with the approach we have taken in funding the park system as a whole. We acknowledge the need for more and would welcome augmentation of funding for cultural purposes if it is not at the expense of the balanced system-wide program which we have developed.





## CONCLUSION

The committee believes that this report accurately reflects the current condition of our parks, their management, and their needs . . . as well as a majority of the Montanans who took part in our review.

The committee's preferred funding alternative rests on a time frame of 5 years. We believe this to be most cost-effective in the long term. Benefits that can flow from early networking with Montana's current tourism effort, while difficult to calculate, also could be significant and an additional spur to the economic picture.

The heightened awareness of the general public to environmental issues, the exceptional quality of our state's natural resources, and the need to protect their leisure time playgrounds suggests the time is most opportune to marshal citizen participation to save our heritage.

In 1986 the public was stimulated by Governor's Forums on Montanans Outdoors, ten public hearings which were held throughout the state at the request of President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors. Montanans expected follow-up which was not forthcoming until the meetings of the State Park Futures Committee in 1990.

The results of these two highly visible and enthusiastically received efforts were consistent and reinforcing. But little, if any, progress was made in the interim. People now not only expect, but demand action. Without it, irreplaceable resources may be lost and important social and economic benefits of the State Park System will continue to go unrealized.

The Administration, the Legislature, and many willing partners who have stepped forward have the opportunity to make substantial progress which will be anticipated and supported by an informed and concerned public. On the other hand, all risk public cynicism about the sincerity in inviting public involvement in the issue, as well as their ability to resolve these matters, if steps are not taken to address these serious problems.

The committee appreciated the opportunity to participate in the process. It was a rewarding, educational, enjoyable, and challenging experience. Montana is blessed with the finest park resources in the nation. We are served by capable and dedicated people. Members of the committee will not soon forget them or our park visits. We were uplifted by the members of the public whom we met. We found them knowledgeable, helpful, and enthusiastic.

We believe that this report accurately reflects the current condition of our parks, their management, and their needs.

We trust that it will be given serious and thoughtful consideration. We hope our recommendations will be implemented. It is not a superficial effort but involves more than a year's work by ten members, is backed by the support of a number of professionals and the experiences of other park systems.

Montana's parks have the potential to be the best in the nation . . . a goal within our reach and worthy of our efforts . . . for ourselves, our children, and generations to come.

## APPENDICES

*(not for general distribution)*

- Individual public meeting summaries
- Consolidated public meeting summary
- Written comments
- Newspaper opinion poll
- Committee Membership
- Committee meeting schedule
- Canyon Consulting vita
- List of sites visited
- 1990 Montana Historic Sites
- Study Commission Report
- "Great Escapes"
- Master List of Parks
- State Park System Plan Draft, Surles
- State Park System Financial Review, Surles







**State Park Futures Committee**